

# THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN NEVADA

Interviewees: 15 Civilian Conservation Corps camp alumni

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Interviewer: Victoria Ford, Renée Corona Kolvet, Dan Bennett

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## Description

The 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program, formed in response to the Great Depression, brought 30,000 young, unemployed men from eastern cities and Midwest farms to work solving ecological problems in Nevada. The state was little affected by the 1929 stock market crash until 1932 when George Wingfield's banking empire collapsed, ore mines closed, and livestock prices fell dramatically. Ecological blows added to economic problems when severe winters were followed by droughts, Mormon cricket infestations, and rampant range fires. The Grazing Service's CCC program in the West was critical to implementing the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934. In addition, the U. S. Forest Service, the Parks Service and Soil Conservation Service (currently the National Resource Conservation Service), the Bureau of Reclamation, Biological Survey (currently the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and the Navy Ammunition Depot in Hawthorne all had CCC camps.

These 15 oral histories with CCC camp alumni were one component of a larger study of the CCC in Nevada. Interviews were conducted in 2000 primarily by Victoria Ford, with help from Renée Corona Kolvet and Dan Bennett. The study also culminated in a published volume by Kolvet and Ford: *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Nevada: From Boys to Men* (University of Nevada Press, 2006) and a technical report "A New Deal in the Desert: The Nevada Civilian Conservation Corps Mapping Project" (2002) for the Bureau of Land Management.



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An Oral History conducted by Victoria Ford,  
with additional interviews by Renée Corona Kolvet and Dan Bennett  
Edited by Victoria Ford  
Photographs compiled by Renée Corona Kolvet

University of Nevada Oral History Program

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## PREFACE

Established in 1964, the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) explores the remembered past through rigorous oral history interviewing, creating a record for present and future researchers. The program's collection of primary source oral histories is an important body of information about significant events, people, places, and activities in twentieth and twenty-first century Nevada and the West.

The UNOHP wishes to make the information in its oral histories accessible to a broad range of patrons. To achieve this goal, its transcripts must speak with an intelligible voice. However, no type font contains symbols for physical gestures and vocal modulations which are integral parts of verbal communication. When human speech is represented in print, stripped of these signals, the result can be a morass of seemingly tangled syntax and incomplete sentences—totally verbatim transcripts sometimes verge on incoherence. Therefore, this transcript has been lightly edited.

While taking great pains not to alter meaning in any way, the editor may have removed false starts, redundancies, and the “uhs,” “ahs,” and other noises with which speech is often liberally sprinkled; compressed some passages which, in unaltered form, misrepresent the chronicler's meaning; and relocated some material to place information in its intended context. Laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of a sentence in which it occurs, and ellipses are used to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete...or that there is a pause for dramatic effect.

As with all of our oral histories, while we can vouch for the authenticity of the interviews in the UNOHP collection, we advise readers to keep in mind that these are remembered pasts, and we do not claim that the recollections are entirely free of error. We can state, however, that the transcripts accurately reflect the oral history recordings on which they were based. Accordingly, each transcript should be approached with the

same prudence that the intelligent reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information. All statements made here constitute the remembrance or opinions of the individuals who were interviewed, and not the opinions of the UNOHP.

For more information on the UNOHP or any of its publications, please contact the University of Nevada Oral History Program at Mail Stop 0324, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 89557-0324 or by calling 775/784-6932.

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## INTRODUCTION

The interviews that comprise the following collection were conducted in 2000. Of the 15 interviews, thirteen were conducted by Victoria Ford, the interview of Calvin Cushing was conducted by Renée Corona Kolvet, and the interview of Edna Timmons was conducted by Dan Bennett. The oral histories were one component of a larger study of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Nevada. In addition to the oral interviews, the study culminated in a published volume: *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Nevada: From Boys to Men* by Kolvet and Ford (University of Nevada Press, 2006) and a technical report “A New Deal in the Desert: The Nevada Civilian Conservation Corps Mapping Project” (2002) for the Bureau of Land Management. The study was partially funded by Nevada Humanities and the Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office. The University of Nevada Oral History Program graciously agreed to include the oral histories in their collections.

The former CCC enrollees and non-enrolled individuals interviewed were located through newspaper inquiries, research at the

National Association of CCC Alumni (now part of the National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri), federal agencies, and word of mouth. With the exception of Calvin Cushing, interviews with out-of-state enrollees were conducted by telephone and local residents were interviewed in person. Chroniclers were living in the states of New York, Missouri, Tennessee, Florida, California, and Nevada. After being discharged from the CCC, a few returned home to work while others enlisted in the armed forces at the onset of World War II. A few enrollees remained in or returned to Nevada. The lone female chronicler, Edna Timmons, was formerly married to Tim Timmons, one of several foremen (called “Local Experienced Men” in CCC parlance) at Camp Paradise near Winnemucca. She shared a wife’s perspective of the CCC program and the challenges of raising a young family in a cramped trailer that was frequently hauled to remote work sites without facilities.

The CCC program was formed in response to the Great Depression, triggered by the collapse of the stock market in 1929. By 1933, nearly 25 percent of the national

workforce was out of work. Hit hardest were the 15 million young men under 25 years of age. During his first 100 days after taking office in early 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) created the Emergency Conservation Work program, officially named the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1937. Congress passed legislation for several new federal programs, although those that provided jobs, like the CCC, sailed through without a hitch. The CCC program was administered by the Departments of Labor, Agriculture and Interior, and the War Department. FDR appointed labor leader Robert Fechner as the national CCC director. Fechner administered the program and regularly apprised the president on its accelerated progress.

The CCC had two main goals: to provide hope and a brighter future for young, unmarried men (on relief) and to rehabilitate degraded lands across the country. By July of 1933, the U.S. Army was conditioning tens of thousands of young men and transporting them to CCC camps nationwide. World War I veterans and reserve officers were recruited to run the camps, and skilled local men were hired as foremen to train enrollees and complete the work. Enrollees had two different bosses. The Army was in charge of the men while in camp, and foremen working for federal agencies supervised them while on the job. Enrollees had access to medical and dental care and were provided “three squares” a day. Most of the young men ate better and lived a healthier existence after joining the CCC. The War Department boasted that the average enrollee gained ten pounds during a six-month enrollment period, despite regular exercise, physical labor, and sports competitions.

One of the greatest, long-term benefits was the on-the-job training. The Army provided scholastic courses in camp and the

federal agencies provided vocational training that later helped the men to secure good-paying jobs. Enrollees learned to drive trucks, cook for large groups, and operate mechanical equipment and ham radios. Others learned drafting, masonry and carpentry, or how to raise livestock. As an added benefit, the men were taught to respect each other, and learned how to live with 200 men from culturally diverse backgrounds. The paramilitary lifestyle made the transition into the armed forces much easier for those who later enlisted. Approximately three million young men between the ages of 18 and 27 joined the CCC between 1933 and 1942.

#### **THE CCC IN NEVADA**

Initially, eastern cities were the most devastated by the Depression, although the rural United States was not exempt. The small state of Nevada was little affected until 1932 when George Wingfield’s banking empire collapsed, ore mines closed, and livestock prices fell dramatically. In addition to the economy, the state was delivered an ecological blow. The 1930s were plagued by severe winters followed by droughts, Mormon cricket infestations, and rampant range fires. Nevada’s large federal land holdings (approximately 90 percent of the state) and the condition of the open range attracted the attention of the President and Congress. Influential U.S. Senator Patrick McCarran and U.S. Congressman James Scrugham fought hard for their constituents and as a result, Nevada was granted more CCC camps per capita than other states. The state’s high standing in Washington paid off once again in 1938 when Grazing Service camps increased at a time when the national CCC program was being downsized. Federal relief monies flowed into Nevada for the first time.



Not surprisingly, Nevada's CCC program was largely comprised of outsiders due to its low population density (just over 90,000 residents in 1930) and the needs of the public domain. During the program's first year, most enrollees came from highly populated eastern hubs including New York City. Before long, men from the Midwest and southern United States arrived in Nevada. Two camps, Berry Creek (near McGill) and Camp Hawthorne (Naval Ammunition Depot), had the most Nevadans. Overall, local residents accounted for less than 25 percent of the CCC workforce.

The popular program benefitted the state in a number of ways. Aside from providing income to enrollees, foremen, and army officers, the CCC's purchasing power aided local commerce. When possible, camps purchased lumber and building supplies from local merchants. Despite low wages (\$30 a month, of which \$25 was sent to their families) enrollees patronized local theaters, bowling allies, and retail stores. The federal agencies in Nevada reaped benefits from the pool of free labor and began to chisel away at their extensive work lists. Had it not been for the CCC, few of the projects could have been accomplished.

Between 1933 and 1942, 59 main camps and a couple of hundred spike camps were established throughout Nevada. The Division of Grazing or Grazing Service (currently the Bureau of Land Management) camps were most heavily represented. The Grazing Service's CCC program in the West was critically needed to implement the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, one of the most massive pieces of federal land use legislation in American history. Including Camp Idlewild, 26 Grazing Service camps were established in Nevada. In addition, the U. S. Forest Service had seven camps; the Parks Service and Soil Conservation Service (currently the National Resource Conservation Service) each had six

camps; the Bureau of Reclamation established five camps, the Biological Survey (currently the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) had four camps; and the Navy Ammunition Depot in Hawthorne had two camps. Three other camps in southern Nevada were run by private or public local entities.

In all, over 30,000 men served in the CCC in Nevada between 1933 and 1942. The national CCC program was terminated when budgets were cut and federal funds were diverted to the war effort. The global war took precedence over conserving the land, and the men were needed to defend their country. For a year or two, caretakers guarded the empty camps in hopes that the program would resume following the war, but that never happened. The post-war years were marked by economic prosperity and employment opportunities abounded. America no longer needed the CCC.

Renée Kolvet  
December 2012



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## CLAUDE A. “CHAD” CHADWELL

*Victoria Ford: Today is November 10, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford, and I'm here with "Chad" Chadwell in his home in Reno. We're going to be talking about CCC experiences today. Chad, let's start a little bit talking about your family. Where were you living at the time you went into the CCC?*

C.A. "Chad" Chadwell: I was living in Tennessee.

*Is that your home state?*

Yes.

*Where in Tennessee?*

I graduated from high school in Chapel Hill, but the larger town close by was Lewisburg.

*It was Chapel Hill where you went to high school?*

Yes.

*Did you live in town?*

No, out in the country.

*Was your family in farming or something like that?*

Yes.

*Tell me a little bit about your family.*

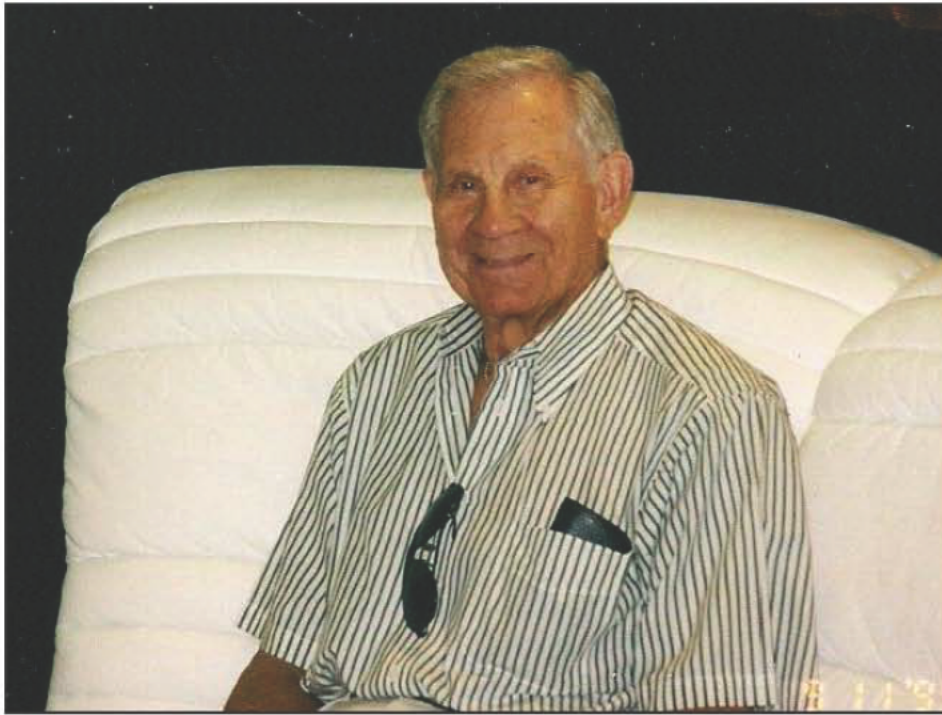
It was just this very small place my father had, and we had a cow, a horse, and pigs. He raised some tobacco, and that was about it.

*About how far out of town were you?*

About six miles from Chapel Hill and about twelve from Lewisburg.

*Did you help with the chores and things on the farm?*

Yes.



Chad Chadwell at his Reno home in 1999. (Courtesy of Claude Chadwell)

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*What were your jobs?*

I mainly used the hoe to get rid of weeds and things like that, and then to cut the tobacco, and get it in the barn.

*Did you raise your own food, too? Did you have a garden?*

We had a garden. We had a vegetable garden.

*Did you have brothers and sisters?*

No, I was the only child.

*Did you go into the CCC right after high school?*

Yes. I went in my junior year.

*I have one more question about your family. Was your family feeling any impact from the Depression?*

Yes. That was the main reason I had tried to get in, because for your senior year you had to have a few extras. You needed extras like a new pair of shoes, so I figured the CCC would be a good thing for that. You had to sign up for six months, but they let me out in three months to go back to school.

*Oh I see, so you could do it just over the summer?*

Yes.

*OK. The first time that you went in, where did you serve? You signed up right there in Chapel Hill, or in Lewisburg?*

I signed up in Lewisburg and went to a camp in Tennessee.

*Were you very far from home?*

Yes, quite a ways. It was in eastern Tennessee. It was around the Oak Ridge area. That would be a familiar name that people would recognize.

*Was that your first time away from home for that length of time?*

Yes.

*How did you find the CCC? Was it a bit of a shock after leaving home?*

Not really.

*So you served just during the summer and then went back and finished your high school?*

Yes.

*Were you still considered in, or did you have to sign up again?*

I had to sign up again.

*What happened that time when you signed up?*

I was going to college — my second year — and I got injured playing football, so I thought CC Camp again would be a good place, if I could pass the physical. [laughter]

*Was it a matter of money again once you were injured playing football?*

Yes, I couldn't play football anymore, so they took away the scholarship, and that was it.

*Did you get through your second year then?*

Well, I had enough credits to get through, but I actually didn't finish the second year as far as all the classes went. I did have enough credits supplied.

*Then you signed up again. What happened this time when you signed up?*

This time I went to California.

*Where in California?*

Litchfield. That's south from Susanville a ways.

*I'm not familiar with that one. That must have been a fairly small place?*

Yes, very small.

*What was going on at that camp?*

They had a post office, but I don't think they even had a store. Well, maybe they had a little general store there, but our mail came to Litchfield. We went to Susanville for any entertainment or anything like that.

*What was your job there?*

My job was Assistant Educational Advisor.

*How big of camp was that?*

You mean how many people?

Yes, how many?

I don't remember how many.

*Do you remember how many guys were there?*

No, I can't.

*You started right off as Assistant Educational Advisor? Was that your job right away when you went in?*

When I first went in, the camp was in California. Then it was moved. They abandoned the camp in California — moved it to Gerlach — and then I became the Education Advisor there because I had two years of college...[laughter] Many of the boys that were in camp didn't have an awful lot of education, so that was mainly how I got picked.

*To be able to have a couple of years of college at that time was like the equivalent of having your college degree then. About how long were you at Litchfield before they moved the camp to Gerlach?*

I think it was maybe six months.

*During those six months you served as an assistant to someone else who was the Educational Advisor?*

Yes, most of that time I was out building trail and things like that.

*It wasn't full-time as Educational Advisor?*

Not until we moved to Gerlach.

*You got a little taste of the work there, too?*

Yes, right.

*Then you moved to Gerlach. What year was it when you actually ended up at Camp Gerlach?*

It must have been 1937 or 1938.

*Had the camp already been in operation, or were you setting that up from scratch?*

We were setting it up from scratch when we came. The buildings were already built, and they just moved the personnel from California.

*What had the buildings been used for prior to that?*

They were built specifically for the camp.

*That was done when you came?*

The buildings were already there.

*Tell me what the buildings were. What did the camp consist of?*

I think we had three or four barracks. We had a building for just general supplies, like cigarettes, toothpaste, and things like that, and we had the barracks for the mess hall where the people ate. Then we had a first aid building, an educational building, and different various supply buildings.

*It was a pretty good-size camp, set up for quite a few guys.*

Yes, right.

*When you got to Camp Gerlach, then you were the full-time Educational Advisor, right?*

Yes.

*Tell me what kinds of work fell under your jurisdiction there.*

We would have classes for the fellows. We could teach them arithmetic and typing — just

general things like that. Once or twice a week we would show movies. We had our own movie machine where we could show movies. We had a specific reading room stocked with five or six different newspapers and magazines as well as an extensive library.

*Were you also in charge of the library? That was under you?*

Yes, and the newspapers and all that stuff.  
[laughter]

*When you say you taught them classes, was it to help them finish high school?*

I guess you could say that, but you wouldn't get any high school credit from what we offered there.

*It wasn't into the school system of Nevada, for example.*

No, it wasn't connected with the school system.

*It could help them if they decided to go back to get their high school diploma somewhere else?*

Right.

*Did quite a few fellows get involved in that?*

Yes.

*Did they do that instead of working, or did they do that after their work? During the day you were in camp while they were out on the trails?*

Yes, right.

*Then they would come in, and that's when your really busy day began?*

In the evening, yes. Of course, they had different days off, and they could come in for classes or whatever.

*Did they have rotating shifts, — some were working every day?*

Yes. Some worked different times. The fellows that were in camp, — at the mess hall and the different supply places and things — they had different hours and different times of work.

*You could have people all day that you were working with?*

Yes.

*That's a long day that you're getting. [laughter]*

Yes. [laughter]


*You mentioned earlier when we were looking at your photographs that you were also in charge of the sports and that the recreation was under your jurisdiction, too. Can you tell me a little bit about the different sports that you had there?*

We had a baseball team. That was our biggest thing — the baseball team — because the town of Gerlach had a baseball team, and we could play them. [laughter] They had ping pong, boxing, and things like that.

*One of the questions that I asked you earlier was that a lot of people have told me that they had the boxing rings to settle conflicts. Was that what your boxing ring was for, or did you have a real sport of boxing?*

Ours was just a real sport. I don't remember any conflicts that were settled in the ring.  
[laughter]





## Christmas & FAREWELL Program

1. Silent Night.....Sung by the Glee Club.
2. Jingle Bells.....Sung by the Glee Club.

Presenting

Dr. Topic.....Camp Surgeon  
Lt. Bryant.....Junior Officer

- 3. Home On The Range.....Sung by the Glee Club.

Presenting

Mr. Beach.....Camp Engineer  
Mr. Parsons.....Camp Superintendent

- 4. Oh! Susanna.....Sung by the Glee Club.

Presenting

Lt. Childress.....Acting Commanding Officer  
Lt. Johnson.....Commanding Officer

5. Dixie.....Sung by the Glee Club.
6. CCC Song.....(words by James Jewell).....Sung by the Glee Club.
7. Auld Lang Syne.....Song by the Glee Club.
8. ....A FREE MOVING PICTURE SHOW.....

The Boys Participating in the Christmas Show Are:

<u>THE TRIO</u>	<u>THE GLEE CLUB</u>	<u>THE MUSICIANS</u>
George Gregerson	Shelbin Sells	James Palmore
Charles Thorne	Herman Watlington	Jake Turner
Claude Chadwell	Sam Williams	
	L. D. Hall	
	John L. Sanders	
	Louis Tharp	
	Floyd Hampton	
	William Waynick	
James Waller	Howard Graves	Robert Milliard
Hugh Trent	Gus Turner	Robert Forsythe
Charlie Shore	James Simpson	Maxwell R. Burger

Shown is the front page of Camp Gerlach's Christmas program in 1938.  
 Chad Chadwell provided part of the entertainment by singing in a trio.  
 (Courtesy of the Nevada Historical Society)



*When it was a sport like this, did you teach the sports, also?*

I guess you could say that, as far as the teams went.

*You were told what the rules of the games were and so on.*

Yes, and so forth.

*Was there anything else that we're missing that you were in charge of?*

No, I can't think of anything else.

*Can you describe for me what a typical day would have been like from the time you got up, and can you tell me how the camp was run?*

It was run much like the army. They'd blow the whistle in the morning, and you'd get up and stand out at attention. Then you'd salute the flag and march in to eat breakfast. Then they would disband, and they would go out on the different jobs.

*For you, what happened after they went off on their jobs?*

I had my own place in the education building. I had my own room there, where I slept and everything. Then my time was my own except for preparing for different things—classes and so forth. Maybe there were some people there that had time so that they could take some class or do something.

*Had you had any experience teaching before you started doing this?*

[laughter] A little bit. I went to a teacher's college, and we went to some of the schools for classes, so I was in on that in one of my classes.

*You did this so you could observe?*

They called it "practice teaching."

*So you had an idea of what you were doing?*

Yes, a little.

*Did the camp have the kind of books that you needed in order to teach?*

Yes.

*I would think that would be difficult when you are just out of school two years to take over like that. It sounds like you had a busy place, that maybe the guys liked coming in there, yes?*

It was actually the recreation hall as well as the educational hall.

*Once their work was done, they were allowed to do whatever they wanted to for the rest of their time?*

Yes.

*They could go to the recreation segment, or they could study or read?*

They could stay in the barracks and read or do whatever they wanted to do.

*You must have been close in age to some of the guys that you were teaching, weren't you? Or were you a little older than some of them?*

Yes, I was close in age to a lot of them.

*Did you guys go into town when you had time off or do anything like that?*

Yes. Generally, on weekends you could go to town.

*Tell me what Gerlach was like in 1937.*

[laughter] Just about the same as it is today. It was a pretty small place. You could say it was one of the last of the old western cowboy towns really.

*Tell me what that was like coming from Tennessee.*

It was quite different. [laughter]

*Did you take to it? Did you like it?*

I liked it. I like the country. I like the desert. There were two factions at Gerlach. There were the people that worked on a ranch—the cowboys and so forth. Then there was a gypsum plant just a few miles away, and of course, the two groups kept the town going.

*Basically, it was the miners and cowboys?*

Right. I think you described it well — miners and cowboys.

*Yes, that's kind of Nevada, but it was all right there in one town.*

Yes.

*Did Gerlach have a movie theater? What did you do for fun when you were in town?*

Yes, they had a movie theater.

*Dances?*

Dances, right. Usually there was a dance every weekend, on Saturday night.

*As Educational Advisor, did you make the same wages as the boys that were out doing the trails? Was it always the same?*

No, I made more.

*You made more?*

Yes.

*Do you remember what the pay was?*

It seems to me like it was maybe forty-five dollars.

*Was it the same system where they sent some of that back to your family?*

Yes.

*So you didn't get all of that for yourself?*

Right.

*I know that the other fellows have been saying that they would get thirty dollars. Then they would keep five, and twenty-five would go back to their family.*

That's just about the way it worked.

*Where did most of the boys come from that were in that camp? You were from Tennessee. Where did all the fellows come from?*

There were some others who were mostly from southern states. I remember some were from Louisiana, and some were from Florida.

*Were there any others from Tennessee? Did you know anyone there?*

Yes, there were some others there from Tennessee.

*From your area?*

No. I showed you one picture there of the boy there on the trail; he was building a trail. As I said, he was in my class in high school, but there were only two or three others that were from Tennessee that I can remember right now.

*The one that was in your class in high school, did he go to Gerlach with you, too?*

No.

*That was trails in the Susanville area, right?*

Yes, he did like I did. He was in for the three-month period. Then we came back, and he and I went to college. We went to different schools.

*So, he was on trail in Tennessee then when you were there, not after.*

That picture was taken in Tennessee.

*Yes. There were mostly southern states at this camp. What kind of reception did the townspeople give to all of you boys at the camp? Did you feel welcome?*

Yes, I would say so.

*They were glad to have you there?*

Yes. I think so, because I think it helped the town.

*The work there was under the Department of Grazing at Gerlach?*

Yes.

*What were the boys doing during the day when they were out working?*

Well, they were out building roads, trails, dams, or cattle guards — things like that.

*As often as I go across cattle guards in Nevada, I've never connected those to CCC days. Were a lot of them built during that time, do you think?*

I don't know really because there were a lot built during that time.

*You mentioned something pretty wonderful that happened to you when you were in Gerlach. You met somebody very special. [laughter]*

[laughter] Yes.

*Tell me about that. How did you meet? You met your wife there, yes?*

Yes. I think it was the baseball team. We were playing the Gerlach baseball team. Her brother Roy and I became friends, and he introduced me to her. I think that was it.

*Did you play on the baseball team?*

Yes.

*Who won? The town, or the CCC boys?*

I think the town had a better team than we did. [laughter]

*They were winning more often, yes?*

Yes.

*You became friends through the baseball, though, from meeting each other that way.*

Yes.

*How long did you serve on the CCC Camp there?*

I think it was about two years.

*1937 to 1939, roughly speaking?*

Yes, something like that.

*Was the camp still open then?*

When I left it was still open, but I don't know if two years was the maximum you were suppose to serve then — unless you had some special job. I could have stayed longer, but that was just before the war. I realized that the camps were going to be broken up and so forth. Then, I went back to Tennessee, and Mary and I got married.

*What did you do from there? That would have been starting towards the war years, yes?*

Yes. I came back to Gerlach. I worked in Tennessee for awhile at a foundry — a stove foundry, where they built stoves. Then when the war broke out, her family was disrupted, so we went back to Gerlach to take care of them.

*How was the family disrupted?*

They were displaced. Whether they were citizens or not, most of the Japanese were displaced depending on where they lived. Being close to the Southern Pacific Railroad,

Gerlach felt that was a danger to the safety of the U.S., so they had to move.

*Where did they move to, or were they moved?*

First, it came very sudden. Some friends had a trailer for her parents to move into. Of course, the children were natural born citizens. They were allowed to stay in the town all right, but after they lived in a trailer for awhile, they came to Reno.

*They didn't get sent to one of the camps or anything like that?*

No.

*But the parents wouldn't have been allowed to stay there in Gerlach?*

No.

*Who would have made that decision that they couldn't stay? Was it the military?*

The War Department did.

*Were you able to help her parents, then, when you were coming back?*

Yes, that was the purpose of me coming back. Then I went to work for the gypsum plant there.

*So you lived in Gerlach?*

Yes.

*But her parents came to Reno?*

Yes.

*Did her brothers and sisters stay with you?*

They lived with us, and then later on they came to Reno with their parents.

*That's like getting an instant family when you are in charge of brothers and sisters, isn't it?*

Yes. [laughter] Her two brothers were in the army, and then her sisters were left there with the parents.

*It really did split up her family.*

Yes.

*It was a big stress for everybody?*

Yes.

*You worked at the gypsum plant, and then you've obviously stayed around this area.*

Yes, I liked this area. I like this country.

*What did you do after the gypsum plant?*

I was chief chemist.

*You stayed there, then?*

Yes.

*Is that what you retired from?*

No. We left there when our daughters got of school age, and we thought we should broaden our horizons a little bit, so we moved into Reno.

*What have you done here in Reno?*

In Reno, I worked for a diatomaceous earth operating plant called Eagle-Picher Industries. I was general works manager

at the plant out here, between here and Fernley.

*Let's go back to the CCC a little bit. What do you think was one of the most important things that you got from the CCC?*

I would say it was a growing up experience—learning to be self-reliant. Of course, going to school, you associate with people, and you learn to get along with people. There again, I think that was instilled in the people there that you work together and cooperate with each other. I think that was a real good experience.

*It sounds like that really worked well at that camp. Other people that I've talked to have often mentioned that they had conflicts until they figured out how to get along, but the way you're talking about it, it sounded like the guys got along pretty well there.*

Yes.

*That's good. Getting along with others was a big thing.*

I think being involved with the sports and the athletics, the recreation and the educational part of it all helped.

*Did it help you kind of further your education to be teaching others?*

I would say so.

*What would you say the CCC left for that area? Is there anything in that area that shows the CCC Camp was there or any of the work that still exists that you are aware of?*

I'm pretty sure there's this reservoir there. I think it's called Fisk Reservoir, and I believe

they built that. That may have been built after I left there, but I know they did some work there. In the field, I was not too familiar with all the jobs in the field because I didn't get out there and see first-hand all of that. Although my first experiences in camp were out in the field, most of my time was in camp.

*Are there any of the buildings or anything like that remaining out there?*

I don't think so. I haven't been there in years and years, but I don't think there's anything left.

*Really? I don't have any more questions. Am I forgetting something that you'd like to tell me about the CCC Camp.*

No, I don't think so. [laughter]

*Well, thank you for your help. I appreciate it.*

Oh, you're welcome.

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MARSHALL CRAWFORD

*Victoria Ford: Today is November 6, 2000, and my name is Vikki Ford. I'm here with Marshall Crawford in his home in Reno. We are going to be talking about his experience with the CCC program. First, Marshall, tell me where you lived when you first found out about the CCC.*

Marshall Crawford: I was living in Yerington, and I had just got out of school.

*Out of high school?*

Yes. I had been working on ranches and in grocery stores and whatever I could find—I shined shoes sometimes. This was during pretty tough times in 1934, and it was awfully hard to make a living then.

*Tell me a little bit about your family. It was necessary for you to work. Were others working, too?*

There were seven of us in the family, and when my father died, I was fifteen years old. Then we had some trouble times yet.

*What did your mom do to help support the family?*

She didn't have any years with important people, and she was no different from most of the other people around there—no way to make any money—so she washed clothes and ironed clothes for people.

*From what you're saying, it sounds like it was tough times for a lot of families in Yerington.*

Most families in Yerington were having tough times. The economy of that area—Mason Valley—at that time was farming, and then there were a few merchants able to keep going. That was about all that there was. The mines weren't going then, so they raised potatoes, onions, alfalfa, and cattle in that area. They still do, to some extent. It was really difficult. For two summers I worked for Mr. Hall—Fletcher Hall was his name—in the bees. I worked with honey bees, and I worked the extractor wagon. It was a trailer pulled by a truck. It had a screen all around. My job was



what they call cutting combs. When the bees fill up a hive with honey, they seal off the ends of each one of these little compartments. That has to be cut off, so that the honey will come out when you put these claims—we call them hangers—in a centrifugal force barrel. They are spun in this barrel.

When they first bring in one of these boxes that had the hangers hanging in them—these were full of honey -- and they slid them in through a swinging door. I would pick them up and take these hangers out and put them up, and I had a knife that had steam going through all the time. It was a real sharp knife, and it had steam going through to heat it up, so it was real hot all the time. I would cut the tips off these things, and then Mr. Hall would put them in these hangers in this centrifugal force barrel, and spin them and spin the honey out. The honey was pumped from there into big, one thousand gallon tanks on trucks. One time we filled the thousand-gallon tank and had a whole bunch of ten gallon cream cans; we filled all them with honey. We just got to where there wasn't any room, and they were only about two-thirds through gathering the honey from what they call an apiary. It's a place where you have lots of bee hives. This was down by Schurz, on the Indian reservation.

*That was one of the jobs that you did.*

That was a job, but that wasn't at the three C's, though. That was an individual job.

*How did you learn about the three C's?*

I learned about it in conversations with some friends of mine when I'd be in town. The subject came up, and I don't know exactly who it was, but someone there—maybe it was

Mr. Barton who was the county assessor. I'm not sure he was the county assessor. He was a real nice man, and he recommended to me that I go and sign up. They had an office open, and they were just beginning the three C's at the time. They hadn't been going too long.

*It was a new program.*

That one over there, at least, hadn't been, so I went down and signed up. Sure enough, they accepted me. That was no problem. You don't have to know anything else to go to work for the three C's. You didn't then, so I went over to Hawthorne.

*Were you the only boy from Yerington that went in?*

No, I was not. There were at least three more. There were four more from Yerington that went to that particular three C camp. There might have been more, but I don't think so. One of them was Bruce Miles. One of them was Darrell—we just called him Del—McIntire. There was William Newcomb and Jack Newcomb, two brothers. Those are the only ones that I can remember now, having come from Yerington.

*At the time that you had signed up, were you still living at home and helping out at home?*

I was still living at home, yes, except for those times when I was working on the ranches; then, of course, I stayed on the ranches and had my meals on the ranches. This was for a particular job that they wanted done, like cutting the hay—I'd sit on a mowing machine or rake.

*Otherwise you were trying to help out at home with your brothers and sisters.*



Yes. Everything that we could make, we all went together on. I had five younger brothers and sisters. I had one brother who was older than me, and another one was just a little younger than me, a little over a year. He was pretty tough; he was stronger than I was, so he worked quite a bit, too. We missed some school during those days, too, when we had a job.

*Then you heard about CCC, and you signed up. Did you have any idea of where you'd be going when you first signed up?*

No, I had no clue, as to where they were going to take me, but what I got was a bus ticket to Hawthorne. They gave that to me in this office in Yerington. I can't remember whose office it was, but I'm pretty sure that was in the court house, where the office was. They gave me this ticket to Hawthorne, and then I knew I was going to Hawthorne. I had been there a time or two, but I didn't know anything about it.

*When you got there, tell me a little bit about what you found.*

They didn't have the camp completed when I got there. They had a mess hall, where we ate, and they had one barracks already finished. They had a shower room and washroom. That's where I broke my tooth, in that washroom.

*How did you break your tooth?*

Those buildings were covered with tarpaper, and tarpaper was held on by battens—little thin slats of wood. I was working on the roof, and I was driving tarpaper nails down through the tarpaper to hold the roof on. I had nails in my mouth;

somehow or other, I got one in between my teeth, and I slipped on that roof. I tried to keep from falling off the roof, and when I did, I must have clamped down, so I lost the tooth here.

*Did they have a dentist there to help you out?*

They had a dentist there, and he pulled out what was left of the tooth. They had a dentist, and they had a doctor. I should have mentioned that before, but I think the doctor and dentist just visited. I think the two just visited; they didn't stay full-time.

*There was one barracks and a mess hall and a shower room. How many guys were there when you arrived?*

When I got there, there was one barracks that was pretty well filled up. If I remember right, there were about forty men in a barracks. It was a long building covered with tarpaper, again, and it had bunk beds in them. It had a big pot-bellied heating stove right in the middle of it. Of course, that's where we kept warm in the winter.

*Were there only those forty men there when you arrived, or were there more than that?*

There was maybe a little more, because there was another barracks, but I could be mistaken about this. It seemed to me that they ended up with three barracks full of men. That would be about a hundred and ten or a hundred and fifteen men. Most of them were young guys, and a big proportion of them were young fellows just out of high school from Utah, so they were all in one barracks. I was in the same barracks they were, but everything went fine. They were foreigners as far as I was concerned, but not

necessarily. After all, I had moved to Nevada from Colorado when I was eleven years old. I got along fine, anyway, but that was the first time that I learned about fifty-gallon oil barrels and dishwashing machines.

*Now tell me what that is. [laughter]*

[laughter] Well, they issued us what we call mess kits. Are you familiar with what a mess kit is? It is a metal thing with a top. It is a flat dish with a top, and most of them are aluminum. Some of them were made of galvanized iron, and they were stamped out. It had a handle on it that would close over and hold the lid on. Well, then you had a knife, fork, and spoon. The knife, fork, and spoons had rings in the ends of them, in the end of the handles, so that you could put those rings over that handle that came over to hold the lid on. You had it all there by the handle; you had the top and bottom of your mess kit, and you had your knife, fork, and spoon. To wash your dishes, they had three barrels, and all of them with boiling water in them—big barrels and big fires under them.

Also, they had a big rough brush with a handle on it. First, when you would take and dip into this boiling water, you would brush off the residue of the food, and that got to be pretty messy in that barrel. It was boiling hot, though, so you went and dipped it into the next one and sloshed it around in the next barrel, and that got it pretty clean. Then you ran it into the other boiling barrel of water, and that did the job. You got your stuff pretty clean.

*Was there soap in any one of those barrels?*

There was soap in two barrels. I'm sorry. I should've told you. The soap that they used was the same kind of soap that was used to scrub the floors with.

*Was it lye soap?*

It was made out of lye and I don't what all. It came in big bars, so it was the same kind of soap. We complained about everything, so we didn't like the way that was. Of course, we didn't think that we were getting fed as well as we should. We were really being fed very well down at the main camp. Then we put up a little boxing ring and a couple of things like that for recreation. They had a couple of punching bags in this same building that they had the showers in.

*You didn't have a separate recreation building?*

No, if I remember right, there wasn't. It was just a shower room on part of it. It was a pretty good size shower facility, too. There were a lot of guys, about a hundred and some guys.

*Yes, right. How about the baseball or softball team?*

I wasn't on it, but we had a basketball team. The basketball team beat everybody in the area.

*Who did they play? The high schools?*

They played the high schools, and they played the town teams. Yerington would maybe send over a town basketball team, and these guys from Utah beat them. Most of the guys on the basketball team were those guys from Utah that I mentioned. They had a company of marines there at the base, and they did the guard duty and that kind of thing for the Navy. It was a naval ammunition depot, and we always beat the marines.

Then we had boxing, and you might be surprised to know that we beat them in

every one of the boxing matches. We weren't any slouches. We were nothing but CC guys making twenty-one dollars a month. I made twenty-one dollars a month, and they sent sixteen dollars of it home to my mother. Then they gave me five dollars. That was my spending money, but it was enough. I didn't have any place to do much. We went to Hawthorne a few times.

*Did you?*

We walked around in the streets. That was during prohibition, anyway. Nobody did any drinking. I'm sure the people around Hawthorne knew where to get some if they wanted some, because it wasn't really very well-enforced.

*Did they have any dances in Hawthorne?*

They had Saturday night dances, and we did go to those dances. I'm glad you mentioned that, because we did go to dances. The local girls were all turned out, and most of them would dance with us. I guess all of them wouldn't, though. We did all right that way.

*You got fed and had some fun.*

We did have a little bit. We didn't work that hard, either.

*You didn't? Tell me a little bit about the work.*

As I told you I got there fairly early in the development of this one particular three C camp.

*It was 1934 that you went there?*

It might have been in December in 1933, but it was right in the middle of the

wintertime. Anyway, my first job was helping the painter. They had a painter who painted all the telephone poles and power poles that ran around the base with red and white striping. Well, they used this silver paint for the white part. I helped him by just carrying buckets of paint and that kind of stuff. In those days it was pretty heavy—it was lead-based paint in those days—so I lugged paint, and this fellow was *remarkable*. He had an extension ladder; these poles weren't real high, but maybe twenty to twenty-five feet. He could pick up that ladder by the rungs and balance it and walk around through the sagebrush to the next pole after he got one of them painted. Of course, my job was to carry the paint the best I could. That was kind of hard work for a while, but it could have been worse. I was used to working; I had been working since I was eleven years old. When I was eleven, I had my first job where I had to be on there every day, so I knew what it was to work.

Then we got all the poles around there painted. There wasn't anything for me to do except go to work on the igloos. I don't know whether you are familiar with those igloos, but the navy had storage buildings to store bombs in. Some of them were four feet in diameter,—just big round balls—and they would load them with a powder inside. They didn't put the detonators on them when they stored them in these igloos, but they were like a potato cellar. Have you seen an old-fashioned potato cellar? They are usually long. These were nicely made, and temperature control was real good. They had heating and cooling units in them that kept them at a constant temperature.

*Were they partly underground?*

They were partly underground and partly above ground. They looked like a Quonset

hut, except they were much longer and were concrete. Then they covered them with sand. That was right out in the sand hills anyway. I got on that crew that would replace the sand on these igloos as fast as the wind blew the sand off of them. We worked on that, and I had a little description about the sand. We had to repeat this every so often, to keep them covered with sand.

*There were some problems in getting that sand to the igloos, from what I read in here.*

Yes. It had to be done by shovels and wheelbarrows. They'd dig a hole in the sand about forty or fifty feet away from the igloo, and then we had shovelers to shovel the wheelbarrow full of sand. Then, somebody had to wheel the thing full of sand to the top of the igloo and dump it. There was another man there, which usually ended up being me in my particular crew,—that had to spread the sand out. They just dumped it there. Then I threw it around, spread it out on top of the igloo, and tried to get it in the regular depth of thickness. I worked on that for quite a while—must have been maybe two or three months. Then when spring broke, they developed this program of building a truck trail from the navy base. It didn't go clear from the base. It went from the road that connects Schurz and little bit of a trail there, a dirt road part of the way.

I got on the survey crew because I knew Bruce Miles, and Bruce Miles was from Yerington, like I told you. He was the engineer—a college man—so he was studying engineering anyway. I got on this crew of surveyors to survey this road. The rest of the time that I spent in the three C's, I worked on that road at the foot of Cottonwood Canyon, building this road. The first to go over was us, the survey crew. The engineer was Bruce Miles, and he looked through his little glass

and decided where to keep the grade in a reasonable degree. He would survey, and then he would put in stakes. Well, I got to do that. I got to carry stakes by the hundreds. I drove the stakes down there, where they told me to.

Then in surveying the center line of the road, they used a fill-in line, but it wasn't a big one. Actually, it was a transit—a telescope with cross-hairs in it. At the bottom it has a plate that is marked off in degrees, minutes, and half-minutes so that you could turn it in exactly the number of degrees you want. Then with a little screw you tighten it there, so that it will stay if you want it to. This is the way they surveyed the center line. Every hundred feet we put in a stake.

*When you say you carried hundreds of them, did you just carry them in your hands or on your shoulders?*

Only about fifty at a time. [laughter] You carried as many as you could get in your arms.

*You didn't have any special way to carry them?*

I had to pick them up, put them down, and drive stake. Pick them up and put them down, all that kind of stuff. Finally, we got another man on the survey crew who did nothing but that. He did nothing but carry stakes, because it got to be too much of the running back and forth, picking up, putting in your stakes, and carrying them all. Actually, there ended up being two of us doing that.

Well, I graduated to running the level rod. A level rod is a pole, marked off in inches and tenths of inches, with white. It's white, basically white, but it is marked off with inches and tenths of inches. You set that on a stake that you have driven, and you put in a Y-level. They use the letter Y, a Y-level. Your Y-level is set up and situated. It is always level.

No matter what direction you're pointing it, it is still level. You could read from this level log, how many feet and inches that the ground is. The top of the stake is from the same level as the instrument. I'm not doing a very good job of explaining.

*The idea is that you not only had to find the center line of the road, but you had to figure out what would make the road level?*

Right. First we had to run the center line. To use that, you used the transit and a line rod, which isn't marked off in inches. It's just a white and black rod with a kind of a sharp point. It points like that, only it's about that big around and comes down to a point. You could put it right on top of a stake, or if you wanted to be more accurate, you could draw the hollow-headed nail into the top of the stake and put the point of this line rod right in that hollow point.

We really didn't do that much, because it wasn't that particular, whether there was a little irregularity in the truck trail or not. We weren't surveying a railroad or Interstate 80.

*You were just going to make a road so trucks could go.*

They called them a truck trail. In the crew there were people that drove the machinery, like the bulldozers. We had a couple of bulldozer operators, like Jack and Bill Newcomb. I told a lady their names. We had a grader. It was a motorized grader. That was the earth moving equipment, and we had a couple of shovel operators

*Once you were done with the surveying, were you moved on to any of these other areas, or were they working behind you as you went ahead?*

Well, I resigned from the three C's very shortly after we got to top of Mt. Grant, as soon as that survey job was over. We did spend a few days after that with the Coast and Geodetic Survey. We had surveyed the road to the top of the mountain. By triangulation they measured the distances all around the country. It was the top of Mt. Grant, and they had a mirror, which was about four inches in diameter, set up on a mountain up by Fernley. That was, of course, the geodetic survey. It wasn't the three C's. All we did was help them carry some of their equipment up there to the top of the mountain, and we worked with them, whatever they wanted us to do. They surveyed the whole countryside, but it hadn't been surveyed since 1880.

They had one creek called Rose Creek, but they had a mile and a quarter from where it really was, on the old 1880s survey. A lot of those surveys, they just got them by walking or riding the distances, making an educated guess about how far it was.

*Yes. They didn't have this kind of equipment.*

They had some equipment, but they didn't use them in the way the Coast and Geodetic Survey did, when we were up there in 1934.

*You worked with them a little bit, and then you resigned?*

Just for a few days, and then I just went home.

*You decided that you had enough?*

I wasn't unhappy, really, but we did go on some weekends to Yerington from work. We started down by Walker Lake at the foot of Cottonwood Canyon.



*It started at Walker Lake.*

At first, when we were on this survey crew, we were driving from the main camp. We got on the truck, and they would take us out there from the main camp near Hawthorne, where the navy base was.

*It was close to the navy base?*

It was right next to the navy base, where our camp was, but then we got to where it was. It got to be quite a distance, quite a trip, and it took quite awhile to move your men—get all these guys loaded on the truck, haul them up to where their job was, and then go pick them up again, and haul them back to the main camp—so they started out what they call a spike camp. We stayed in tents in the spike camp.

*Was that right in Cottonwood Canyon?*

No, it was at the top of Cottonwood Canyon. We started that spike camp before we got that far with our work. We set up the spike camp, which wasn't too far from the top of Mt. Grant, rather than to go from clear over by Hawthorne clear around by what we called Mike Knopf's. It's now called Walker Lake, Walker Lake resort.

*It used to be called what?*

I think it was Mike Knopf's place.

*It's now where the resort is. I know about where you mean.*

You have probably been through there.

*Yes, I have been past it. That's a ways out of town.*

It was up Cottonwood Canyon so instead of going that way, we would drop down from the spike camp. It wasn't as far. We had our trucks and stuff. We would do our work and work our way up that way, until we finally got over. Now this was right where Cottonwood Canyon ends and Lappen Meadows begins.

*That's where this spike camp was—right by the meadows.*

The spike camp. It was sort of up on the summit. You go up the Cottonwood Canyon, and you get to where we had our tents and stuff, and then you could kind of drop down into Lappen Meadows from there. Now Lappen Meadows is an old place where, way back in the early days, they had a placer mine going. There was gold there, a little. They had a placer mine in that, so they must have had a drag line or shovel, and sluice boxes. Of course, we weren't there for a long time after they quit, but they really ruined that little meadow. They tore it all up, getting the gold out. Anyway, that's where we were in our spike camp, and from there we surveyed the road. We had to make a lot of switchbacks. People call them other names, but we call them switchbacks. We did that in order to get up to the top of the mountain.

*It was pretty steep.*

It was too steep to drive up it. You couldn't drive up the mountain, so it had to go back and forth, like trails do. Of course we surveyed this road. There were some interesting things up there about that area, but one of the things is that I always used to like to go around and be kind of an amateur archaeologist. I liked to look for arrowheads, and those were the days that nobody cared. On Sundays, if we didn't go somewhere else,

I would wander around the hills. There is a big grove of mountain mahogany up there that I went into that the deer frequented, and I found Indian artifacts in that grove of mahoganies. There were lots of sage hens, and sage hens are very tame before they get used to people. Usually, you can walk up to within ten feet of them, but no more.

You can't do that again, now with the sage hens: they are wild. They had never seen people or anything, so we occasionally threw a few rocks at the sage hen, although we never hit one. They're not that easy to hit.

*Yes. When you had your tent camp up there, it seems like water might have been a problem. Did they have to haul water up for you guys at the spike camp?*

Yes. Well, there was a creek there. Of course, I used to drink out of it all the time, because I had never been anywhere. I didn't hesitate to drink out of that little stream, but they did have water available. They also had water for showers; they had a lister bag. I'm not sure if you are familiar with that.

*No, describe that to me.*

A lister bag is a big canvas sack that hangs from poles. You put up poles, and then this lister bag has a tough rim around, and a rope fit around it. They tie this rope, the bag hangs down there, and they fill her up full of water. It had a spraying thing at the bottom, so you could turn that on and take a shower. The lister bag that we had there was as big around as these chairs here, and probably that deep. Four feet deep.

*Across and diameter?*

No, eight feet across.

*Eight feet across and five feet deep?*

It was a big lister bag.

*Were most of the guys up at the spike camp, or were there still some guys that were staying back at the main camp?*

Well, there were only a few of us that went on that road job. Most of these men were from Utah, as well as a lot of other people. They did lots of different things; they cleared trails—plowed trails, up on the mountain—and improved other roads. The road I worked on was just one of several roads that the three C's worked on. Then they did some other projects that I can't even remember, because I didn't get involved in it. I remember about the igloos, about the paint, and about the survey crew, but the rest of them I don't really know too much about.

*There was plenty of work for everybody?*

Oh, yes. At the spike camp we had a cook and a cook's helper as well as two bulldozer operators. I think we had two truck drivers.

*Then you were on the survey crew.*

Then we had a grader operator who operated the grader, and on the survey crew, there was Bruce Miles and Rolly Bennett. He was another boy from Yerington. There were at least two more of us—one guy that we called, "The Can't-Take-It Kid."

*"Can't-Take-It Kid?"*

Yes. He was from Detroit. I remember that. He'd say, "Oh! I just can't take it!"

Well, he was as tough as everybody, but we called him that after he got to saying, "I just can't take it."

We all complained about things and had a lot of expressions, but some of them which weren't very polite things to say. Anyway, he worked on the survey crew, too.

*Was it kind of hard on kids like this one from Detroit who had never been out in the desert before? Did he think it was pretty rough?*

He never really complained. He would say, "I just can't..." He didn't really mean that. I don't think it was very hard on them. Certainly it wasn't very hard on me. I had worked an awful lot harder than that in the hay fields and shoveling coal, so I didn't think it was hard work.

*When you resigned and went back to Yerington, how did you make that decision?*

We went back there on a weekend, and my mother said, "Well, Mr. Keen has come around here about every three weeks and is kind of wondering if you were back yet. He would like to have you go to work."

He had a farm and things like that. Gee whiz, I found out that and when I went home from the three C camp, I went home to my mother's house where I lived and then went down town. They had a pool hall down there, and a lot of young guys gathered then. Of course, there was no liquor, but that was fine. I came back from that, and my mother told me that there had been three guys here looking for me. They wanted me to go to work for them. Now, that was in the Depression. So many guys were out at the three C camp that it was kind of hard for farmers to get somebody to work, so they needed help. I never went unemployed after

that, but I sure had to scratch before I went into the three C's. Times were naturally getting better.

*How long were you in the three C's altogether?*

I went in in December, but I remember I got out about the middle of October.

*You were in almost a year then.*

About ten months. When the first snow fell, we were in the spike camp, and we were just finishing the very last of that road to the top of Mt. Grant. Actually, the road doesn't go right to the very top, because it's just a big rock about the size of this road up there. You can crawl up on it and look all over. That was one of the most beautiful sights I ever saw. It had just snowed, and the clouds were below us, so we could look down on the clouds and then look down at their shadows. It was just this little bit of snow—wonderful. We could see clear over to the Sierras. I don't know how far they are away—a hundred miles or more, but I will never forget that.

*It must have been a little bit cold, though, if you were there to the first snowfall.*

It was getting nippy. That Mt. Grant is eleven thousand. The Coast and Geodetic guys told us that Mt. Grant was eleven thousand, three hundred and three feet, but I have noticed when the maps come out,—the Nevada state maps—they have it as eleven thousand, two hundred and forty-five. Either that big rock fell off of that top of the mountain, or....

*Or somebody made a mistake. [laughter] You were up pretty close to the top then, with this spike camp?*



We were about a mile and a half from it, by road. Actually, it wasn't a mile and a half from it; it was straight up an incline.

*Were you up at nine or ten thousand elevation, the spike camp? Was it that high?*

It was probably at least nine thousand.

*That would be nice and cool even in the summertime.*

It was. There's something about that, what we did to get wood. They had these fellows who worked for the cook and stuff, and they were just regular guys doing whatever was needed. They would go up and get somebody with the bulldozers to hook on to one of those logs or one of those old trees that had probably been laying up there on the side of that mountain for a hundred years, and then they would drag it down to camp. Then they'd saw it up. We used that for our wood and for the cooking and everything we did. We didn't do that for cooking or anything, but there are no trees on there now. It's just sagebrush right to the top, on each side of the mountain where it's protected. There are trees there. They are this tamarack, so we know that trees used to grow up awful close to that eleven thousand feet in elevation, because we used them for wood.

*Have you ever been back in that area?*

I have never been back up there, because you see that has always been a restricted area. It's a military base. Last year my daughters got hold of the people over there, and it's an army ammunition depot now. They informed us that we could go over there, if we wanted to; they would give us a permit since I had been up there before anyway. We have not done it yet. I'm getting along to where if I don't do it

pretty soon, I'm not going to do it at all. I'd like to go up there and see what that's like, but I did drive up to where the main three C camp used to be. That's been about fifteen years ago, I guess.

We drove up there one day. When we had an occasion to go through Hawthorne and had some time, we drove up there to where that three C camp used to be, and there's *nothing* there. You'd never know that there was ever a building or anything there.

*No foundations or anything?*

No, they didn't have foundations anyway. I was beginning to think, "I'm not in the right place," but I know that I had to be, because I could look back down and see where the navy Base was and where the marine barracks were. They were permanent buildings. They weren't like these shacks that we lived in, and I know I had to be in the right place.

*They might have moved them. I wonder if they did.*

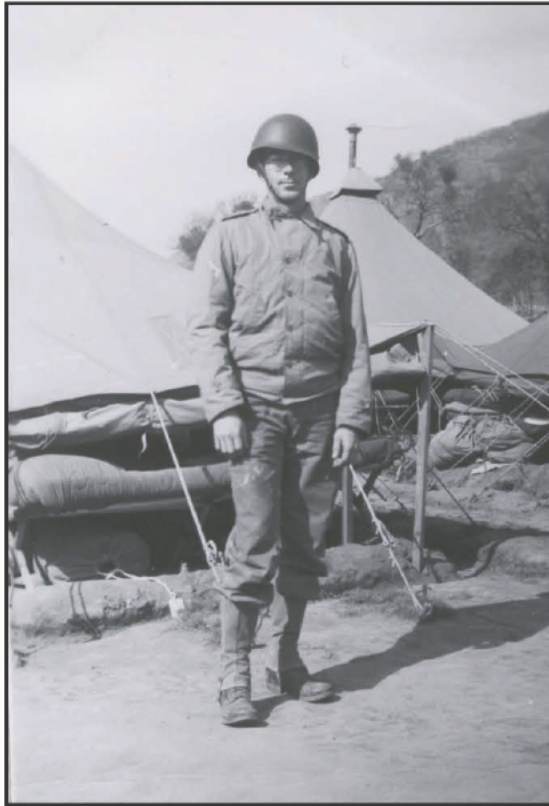
Oh, they probably did move them somewhere.

*A lot of times they move buildings in Nevada from one place to another.*

They wouldn't be that hard to move because you just hook some wheels under them and away you go. They were just frames and tarpaper with wooden batten buildings. They didn't weigh much.

*Surely some of those roads or trails must still be around, too.*

They may be. I didn't have enough time to really explore, but probably if I had been



Marshall Crawford was a sergeant in the Army Air Corps during World War II. This photograph was likely taken in Saipan, ca. 1945. (Courtesy of Ellen Crawford)

and hung around there too long, somebody would be asking me what I was doing up there. I really was on that base.

*Did you have much contact with the guys at the base?*

Very little. Of course, somebody like me didn't have anything to do with anything, except to do what I was told. They had an army captain there.

*He ran the CCC camp?*

His name was Captain Livingood, and we never saw him.

*But he ran the camp?*

Well, the man who ran the camp was a Mr. Billings. He was an engineer and a fine man, but he was the man who really did the business about the building. Actually, as far as we could tell, Captain Livingood was there just because the rules and regulations said that they had to have an army officer there.

I forgot to mention one more thing about that, too. One of the things that induced me to quit the three C's was the rumor that got out that they were going to bring in a whole bunch of army guys and give us military training. I didn't like that idea at all. Of course, I had some military. I put in about three and a half years in the army, and I was a first sergeant in an infantry company when we went overseas. I had a ride in the army.

*They were thinking that they would give you military training, and you didn't want that?*

They were talking about that, and in some of the three C's camps, they did have some of that stuff.

*I think they did have some organization, reveille and things like that.*

We didn't have any of that with us.

*Did any of the guys go AWOL, or did they mostly stay there and do their work?*

I never heard of anybody taking off. Life wasn't that tough. We weren't overworked. I certainly didn't think I was, and I knew the rest didn't work any harder than I did.

*Were there any disagreements or conflicts?*

Sure. Whenever you've got a hundred and fifty guys or a hundred and twenty guys living around there close together, you are going to have arguments. That's what they put up that ring for. These guys that would get into a fight or an argument, they'd go at it in the ring with gloves. That was a good thing, because it kept somebody from being hit over the head with a two by four.

*They had a way to settle their disputes.*

Yes, there were altercations in there. I remember a couple of them. Some of these fellows from Utah were Mormon fellows, and they were pretty defensive, because some of these other guys were not Mormon. Sometimes they made some disparaging remarks about the Mormons. There was one fellow, Scofield. He was from Lovelock and was an older guy. He was a great storyteller, and he didn't stick entirely to the truth.

*Oh, I see. That kind of storytelling. [laughter]*

He told some of them, and then some of them would take him seriously when he didn't mean them that way, too.

Anyway, he was telling about some kind of a massacre. He said that people crossing the plains in a covered wagon caravan were attacked by a bunch of Indians, and one of them had blue eyes. He was telling about this, and one of these Mormon kids, about the same age as me, really got on the fight, so you could have altercations when you got a bunch of men together. He really was mad.

*Why was he mad about that?*

Well, there is a story, which I don't know. I haven't the faintest clue, if there is any truth in it, but sometimes there were renegade white

men who got with the Indians, and then, when they'd have a fight, some of these white men would be seen.

*For some reason that upset that Mormon kid?*

When I was working before I went to the three C's, one summer I worked for an old fellow, and his name was Dack. He came across to the west, from the plains to California in 1859. Now, this hasn't got anything to do with the three C's at all, but I worked for him and did the milking—he had seven or eight cows. I milked the cows and did the irrigating. He fed the chickens and the turkeys and did the cooking. He was ninety years old the day I went to work for him. He told me one time himself, that when they were crossing somewhere over in Colorado, or somewhere on the way West, that he had seen a white man among the Indians. I know a little thing about Daddy Dack's pipe, which doesn't have anything to do with the three C's. I don't think you'd be interested in that.

*It does bring up a question, because your camp was really close to Schurz, which is a reservation area. Did you have any contact with the Native Americans, or were any of those boys in your group?*

There weren't any Indians as far as I know in the camp that I was in. We weren't too close to Schurz, either. We were close to Hawthorne. There is Hawthorne, and then there is Babbitt. That's the community that the navy originally built to house the civilian workers at the navy base. Then coming right past that was where the marine barracks were, and they did the guarding of the base.

*So Schurz is about thirty or fifty miles away.*

It must be thirty miles. Yes.

*When you had Lilke and your basketball teams, you didn't play against the Schurz kids?*

I don't remember. I wasn't on the basketball team. I couldn't play with them.

*You didn't do the sports?*

No, I couldn't play with those guys. I could do certain things, but I couldn't play basketball like they could.

*What do you think was the best thing about the CCC for you? What do you think it taught you? What do you think you learned while you were in it?*

One of the things I learned is that you have to learn that you just have to get along with other people. We lived in this barracks, and we were in there every night, except when we were up at the spike camp. We lived in this barracks, and there isn't anything difficult about living with another bunch of guys or in the same building, as long as you don't create any trouble, or cause problems. Like poor old Scofield, he didn't know he was going to create any problem at all. He was just having fun telling the story.

*You learned that you had to keep the peace.*

Well, I was young, you know. Young people usually have things that they need to learn.

*You would have been eighteen, twenty?*

I was nineteen when I got out of the three C's.

*That is pretty young. Anything else that you think you learned?*

Before I left I talked to Mr. Billings to tell him I was going to leave. He was the man in charge. He must have been fifty years old. He was an engineer. When I talked to him, he said, "Well, Marshall, if you would just get a pair of glasses and stay here, I'll make a civil engineer out of you in five years."

I learned that you should be careful that you don't get too impetuous about what you don't want to do. When you are young, people do this. It makes for a bad decision. I would have been a lot better off, if I'd have done exactly what he said. Financially, I would have been a lot better off. Banking never paid anything. If your daddy owns the bank, it might pay, but for just people going to work for a bank, they don't make money.

*You mentioned getting glasses. You didn't have glasses when you went in?*

No, I needed glasses, but I was too stubborn to get them. I was embarrassed having to wear glasses. None of my family ever had to wear them before. I knew I couldn't see as well as I should. I knew that, but I didn't know that anybody else knew that.

*They could tell that you were having trouble seeing. That is interesting, because you were on the survey crew having trouble seeing.*

Well, I couldn't do things like run that line rod for quite a stretch, because I couldn't see the hand signals they had. I couldn't see well enough to do it. I had to stay where things were closer. Near-sighted.

*What do you think the CCC program offered to young men at that time? Obviously, it gave*



Marshall Crawford became a bank manager at a Yerington bank. This photograph was taken in 1950. (Courtesy of Ellen Crawford)

*them a source of income when they were having a hard time.*

It gave them a source of income, and it did give them a little bit more self-respect. It kept them off the streets if they were from the city, and it gave them a little bit of an idea about what work was. They did have to go to work every day.

*When you look back at those days, did you think it was a good thing?*

Generally speaking, yes. I think it was a good thing. I figure it was a thing that was needed at that time. In prosperous times, I don't think we would need it very much, but a lot of those guys weren't even eating right before they got in the three C's.

*Renée and I were looking at some pictures the other day, and we were commenting on all the guys in a line-up, getting signed up—they were pretty thin. Nobody had any extra meat on their bones at all.*

That's right, and their clothes weren't just exactly the kind they liked to wear, either.

*Did they provide some clothes for you when you went in?*

Yes. They furnished all of our clothes.

*So you had food and clothing?*

We didn't wear all of them, though. We didn't always wear exactly what they wanted us to. A few of us had a little something extra.



I had a hat when I went out in the sagebrush. I wrote about it in my little thing. Two or three of the other guys on the survey crew had their own hat, too, but they gave us a fatigue cap, just like they have in the army today, and in World War II. We had a shirt, pants, underwear—we had all that. We had boots, and they were good boots.

Now, I've got one more thing to say. When they gave me my boots, this was the first time in my life I had ever got that was the proper fit. When they had this thing and they measured my feet, they said, "You wear an 8B."

I said, "I don't, either; I wear a seven."

"No, you don't. You wear an 8B."

They gave me the 8B, and I didn't like that at all for the first couple of hours. Then they got so comfortable. That's the first time. Oh, I had trouble, too, in the three C's. Big trouble.

*What was that?*

When you went in there, they had to give you the smallpox vaccine, and things like that. They had a dentist look at your teeth. They ran me through, and they gave me this smallpox vaccination. In those days, what you did is they'd put this vaccine on your arm, and then they scratched you with a needle, a hundred and four times. That's a lot, and after a while it hurts. Now they don't do that, that way.

Anyway, they gave me my first vaccine, and it didn't take. No sign of anything showed up, so they ran us all through to check us, to see if our vaccines took. If it didn't take, they would have to do it to you again, so they gave it to me again, and I didn't like it any better that time. Four or five days went by, and they said, "I want you to come in. I want to check you. Nothing. "Well, I don't know."

So they got another vile of that stuff, and he gave me the third one. Nothing happened. I went in there after the second one was done,

and he said, "Are you putting tobacco juice on that? What are you doing with this thing? This is a good vaccine. You are doing something with it. I am going to give you one more."

So he did. He gave me that fourth one; it didn't take. Finally, three weeks had gone by at that time. "Well," he said, "We are just going to put you down as immune."

I didn't have any more smallpox vaccines after that. I have had smallpox vaccine since then, and none of them ever took, except the last one, which I had about eight or ten years ago. That was something else.

*They gave you all your vaccines when you went in?*

They gave us the smallpox, and they gave us a shot for diphtheria. That was before they had these DPT shots that they give kids now.

*The thing that I was curious about is when you guys went into Hawthorne. How were you treated by the town's people? Were they friendly to you?*

Generally speaking, I think they were. We didn't have too much. If we went to a dance, then we'd have to pay a dollar, like everybody else. That took a dollar out of my fund I had. I didn't have any problem that way, though.

*I was hearing that the Hawthorne people really wanted a CCC camp there and that several of them got behind getting one located there.*

We didn't spend a lot of money in town. They didn't want us there because we weren't going to be big money for the town that way, because we just didn't have it.

*Maybe it was the projects that you were working on or something?*

That's right. We were working on these things. I can imagine that they did want us there. They did have the marines there and some navy guys. Most of the base was about a hundred miles long, but there were navy people there. The marines are part of the navy. They wanted guards and stuff, and that's what the marines did. I think they had a whole company of marines. There must have been over a hundred marines. We used to watch them when they'd go out training. They had their rifles, and they would be running and falling down. We used to watch them once in a while when they were doing that, but I did plenty of that after that in World War II.

*Is there anything else that you could think of right off hand that I maybe forgot to ask you. We covered the work that you did, and recreation. Did you make friends there that you kept in touch with?*

You bet. We had good friends there, but I've forgotten them now. We had one guy who we called "Wild-Eyed Texan". I don't remember his real name to save my life.

He was really a character, and he was one of the guys that went up to the spike camp with us, too. He was a real good guy, and he was really ambitious. After the war I saw him again. When I was in the army, I went from Reno to Tonopah. That's an air force base. That was before I transferred to the infantry, because I couldn't stand that air force. I could tell you a lot I didn't like about it. Anyway, I was out there, so I came into Reno here, and then I went to Yerington to see my mother. On the way back out to Tonopah, I got on the train in Sparks here—the railroad went as far out as Luning,—and the Wild-Eyed Texan was a fireman on the train.

*He stayed around?*

He was still around the country, and so we had a good visit.

*Did some of the other guys stay around, or did you ever know of any that stayed around?*

No. That is the only one that I can think of right now. There was one fellow named Houk, but he was a little bit retarded. He was one of the fellows I worked with when I was working on the igloos, and he was a worker. He was really a good worker. I don't know whatever happened to him, but I do know that he came from Sparks. We were talking about others that came from Yerington.

*Well, those are all the questions that I have for now. I really appreciate your help on this.*

Well, I hope it's worth something.

*It's really helpful. Thank you.*





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CALVIN C. CUSHING

*Renée Kolvet: My name is Renée Kolvet, and I'm here today with Calvin Cushing. The date is April 20, 2000, and we're at the National CCC Alumni Association headquarters, Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis. Can you tell me, Mr. Cushing, where your family lived at the time you entered the program?*

Calvin C. Cushing: My family lived in Coulterville, Illinois, which was about fifteen miles from Sparta, where the CC camp was that I joined in 1938.

*What kind of work did your parents do?*

They were farmers. My dad was a farmer.

*How many brothers and sisters did you have?*

I had two sisters—no brothers.

*Were you oldest?*

I was the oldest.

*At the time of the Depression, you were living in Illinois. How did it impact your family and farming?*

My mother got the twenty-five dollars, and I got the five. She used that to supplement our income at that time.

*Your father was still alive?*

*What are your impressions of the Great Depression? As a teenager, did you realize that this was going on in the country?*

Well, my parents moved to Illinois in 1931, but at that time I stayed with my grandfather in St. Louis to go to high school. After I went three years to high school, I got some jobs, but they didn't last very long. I went back home, and the opportunity came to join the CC Camp at Sparta, Illinois, so I went in there in 1938. It seemed like it was in the spring or summer of 1938, and right after that the camp was moved to Wells, Nevada.



Photograph of the interior of one of the barracks at Camp Hubbard Ranch. Cushing's bunk was the second on the right. (Courtesy of Calvin Cushing)

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*Did you have any choice whether you went to Wells or not, or did you just go with the camp?*

No, I think the camp just picked up and left. I don't remember anybody saying, "Well, you don't have to go," but it seemed that the camp had orders to move so we moved everything from there to Wells, Nevada, by train. When we got out there, we got off the train right at the camp because the railroad was right behind the camp. We got off there and moved into the barracks, which were not fully completed, but they were good enough that we were out of the weather. There was a small period of time when they finished up everything, but it wasn't very long at all. I'd say that it was weeks at the most. Everything—the kitchen and the mess hall and everything—was completed at that time.

*Did you know where Wells, Nevada, was or anything about Wells?*

I didn't know anything about Nevada or Wells.

*What was your impression when you got off that train?*

We knew we were in an isolated part of the country, but we took it one day at a time by starting to get the working parties going. Then we went to town on the weekends, or on Saturday anyway. On five dollars a month, you didn't go too many places at that time, though.

*They automatically took the money out of your check and sent it home, right?*

Twenty-five went home, and you got five dollars for ordinary jobs. Then as you went up the ladder, the most you could make was twenty dollars a month, which you got, and still twenty-five went home.

*How did you get to have the rank of first sergeant?*

I have no idea. [laughter] The first sergeant at that time went home, and there was an opening, so I guess somebody recommended me.

*Did that affect your pay?*

They gave me a fifteen-dollar increase in my pay, which was all right.

*What added responsibilities did you have?*

I became the first sergeant of the camp, and I had charge of all the men while they were in the camp as far as rosters or doing k.p. or work things at camp. Also, we had reveille and retreat, and we had inspections on the weekend. More or less with a couple of clerks, I ran the camp activities while the men were in the camp. When they left the camp to go to work on the outside, they had other bosses that took care of all that.

*Now, the Hubbard Ranch was not a spike camp, was it?*

Wasn't it?

*I heard references of spike camp.*

Harry Dallas: It was twenty or thirty guys going up in the mountains in the summertime from a camp to do something and then to come back to the regular camp.

*OK. So this was a main camp.*

Just main camp, yes.

*Your first impressions weren't bad then. They put you out in the middle of nowhere.*

Well, we were all young, and I'm sure we looked around and saw the mountains in the distance. We didn't have any welcoming party, I know that. [laughter]

*You sound real positive, but do you think the people you were with adapted?*

Thinking back, I don't remember anybody ever deserting or wanting to go home, but you had six months—I think six months... yes—at a time, and if you were dissatisfied at the end of six months, you'd go home. A lot of them stayed longer, but, there were some that probably were there a year or eighteen months, maybe even two years.

*How long were you there?*

I had about two years there.

*Two years. And I understand that you sign up for six months at a time?*

I think that's what we did.

*So you chose to stay on. What kind of training did you get when you were there?*

The only training I got was how to run a camp. I was a boss, because I had charge of a lot of different details, but I served at the commander's. If he agreed with what I did or liked it, I stayed; if he didn't, he'd probably find a new person to take my job.

*You got supervisory training.*

No.

*Did anybody at the camp?*

Oh, I'm sure boys that went out in the field did different jobs.

Yes.

I worked inside the camp.

Harry Dallas: It's what they called overhead. [laughter]

*Overhead. You kept telling me about these roads. The roads that were built had to do with the range management and the farms, because it was a range-management camp. Do you remember where any of the roads went?*

I just remember that about seven o'clock in the morning or so the men got in the trucks, and they went out in the field. They took chow out to them about noon time, and they came in probably about four o'clock in the afternoon. They worked wherever their details assigned them, but I very seldom would run out in the field.

*What did you do while they were out in the field?*

That's a good question. [laughter] I more or less inspected. I walked around to see what I could find that I could do. I had two company clerks that did all the office work, and I was more or less the go-between for them and the officer in charge. That was the gist of it.

*Did you ever interact with the Hubbard Ranch people?*

No.

*You never saw them much?*

I don't ever remember seeing anybody that would say that they owned that land or, anything like that.

*Well, I believe some of it was probably privately owned, and some would have been government property, you know, which is administered by the BLM today. What about the basics? Tell me about your lodging and how many men would be in one of the barracks units, the housing units.*

I'd say there were probably forty to fifty men in the barracks. They had footlockers for their personal belongings. They had hangers that they could hang their clothes on, and it all had to be neat and orderly. We had three stoves for the heat.

*Did you remember being cold?*

It got cold out there, but I don't think it got excessively cold. We had winter clothing that was furnished by the army, o.d.'s or khaki in the summertime, but you never had to spend any of your money on anything besides your personal necessities. All the rest of it was furnished by the government.

*Medical care, too?*

They had a doctor in camp. We had a young doctor that was from Idaho, and he

probably spent five to five and a half days in the camp; he might go home over the weekend. We did have a couple of orderlies that took care of minor medical problems, so it was good medical at that time to take care of everybody.

*What kind of staff did you have? What was the hierarchy in the chain of commands at your camp?*

We had one captain. We had maybe two second lieutenants, but that was whoever was in charge of running the organization. Then, on the other side, they had people that would work the work details, and we had a superintendent that ran the camp for all the outside activities. Also, he had people under him that were in charge of the men going out into the field, doing whatever job they gave them to do.

*Do you remember if any of these people that you just talked about had been in the military prior to coming to the camp?*

I don't think any of the construction people were in the military.

*Right. The superintendent or the captain?*

The captain was a reserve officer.

*Do you remember his name?*

His name was Edward Cleveland.

*He was a reserve.*

Yes, and I imagine the lieutenants were reserve, too.

Harry Dallas: Yes, all the army officers were reserve officers.

I think we had one officer, a lieutenant, and I think his name was Smith.

*How about the food? Was it good?*

Food was basically good. It was ordinary, everyday food. They had menus, and they usually rotated the menu. We had a mess sergeant whose job was to come up with breakfast, lunch, and dinner and to have variety in the food. At that time it wasn't bad. It served its purpose.

*You weren't hungry. They fed you enough.*

Yes. Nobody had to go hungry anyway.

*Three meals a day?*

Three meals a day.

*What would happen if you wanted a snack?*

We had a small place where you could buy candy bars, but I don't think there was much of anything else that they could buy.

*Was that like a p.x.?*

I don't remember them selling soda or anything like that. It probably had candy bars and shaving necessities, but that was about the gist of it.

*How did you get your mail?*

Mail was delivered on the road by where our camp was, and people would go down



there. We got a daily mail delivery from Wells, and that more or less took care of the mail coming and going.

*OK. Obviously you played baseball. You showed me some photos. What was the recreation like for the people that were there?*

In the evenings they had movies that were brought in. They more or less were distributed to all the CC camps, and they would be rotated. You have movies probably a few nights of the week. You had some recreation on baseball, but it wasn't too much. We had where you could read. They had books and magazines, and you could go

there to the educational building. Some of them went to night school to further their education so that maybe they could complete their four years of high school.

*Right, and you said you had graduated.*

I had three years of high school, and I never went down.

*You didn't go in the evening.*

No.

*Did many of the enrollees participate in the education?*

No, I'd say a small amount, but there was just enough to keep it going.

*How about weekends? That was your time off, right—Saturday and Sunday?*

On the weekend you had inspections on Saturday morning. Then you had Saturday afternoon and Sunday off, and you were free to go to places. The closest place was Wells, Nevada, and we had trucks that would go into Wells on Saturday evening and bring you back later on in the night to camp. That was our main thing of entertainment or recreation.

*Did many people stay overnight in Wells for the weekend?*

Not too many, no. Wells was a small community. You went in and went to a show or they had a dance hall there, but that was the gist of going to Wells.

*That was Wells. So the dance hall was used by locals?*



Cushing and two other enrollees don Camp Hubbard Ranch baseball uniforms.  
(Courtesy of Calvin Cushing)

Yes. It was a little ways from the main part of Wells, but everything was within walking distance. They would have a band from somewhere, and there were girls from Wells or surrounding areas. The men from Wells would come to the dances, too. There was no problem.

*No problem with the CCC enrollees coming?*

No. Everything seemed to work pretty good. We had another camp south of us, so they had two CC camps that would come to Wells on Saturday night, but I never knew of any problems in the city or in the town.

*Yes, no animosity between the locals and the boys coming in from the camp?*

No, I think they tolerated us like anybody else.

*Do you think they welcomed the help or the people coming into the communities?*

I think the people of Wells were very sociable, and I never knew of any incident where somebody got in trouble.

*What was your impression of the local people?*

I thought they were friendly and courteous. Outside of that, I don't think I thought of anything else about it.

*Yes, I just wondered because you were so remote in your camp. I thought you didn't get to interact too much.*

No, they wouldn't like it if you were right next door. You only went in there periodically, and the most you'd be in there is probably once a week on a Saturday. It would depend

upon how your money lasted whether you went in or not. Some boys just stayed in camp; others went in and went to the movie or did whatever and then came home.

*Now, you discussed fishing and hunting.*

On the weekends you could go fishing, and we were allowed to have weapons, rifles. We used to hunt jackrabbits. We fished in some little streams around the area, but that was the gist of that.

*What did you do with the fish? [laughter]*

I don't think I ever brought back the fish that I caught for anybody to clean or eat. I guess we just caught them and maybe let them go. I don't ever remember anybody bringing fish back to cook. I don't think they were that abundant out there, to tell you the truth.

*You told me one time that you took a trip to the World's Fair.*

In 1939 the educational advisor, another man by the name of Albert Vales, and I went to San Francisco. We spent about four days at the World's Fair, sightseeing.

*How did you get away for four days?*

I guess the captain left the educational advisor and me. Then Albert gave us four days off. That's about it.

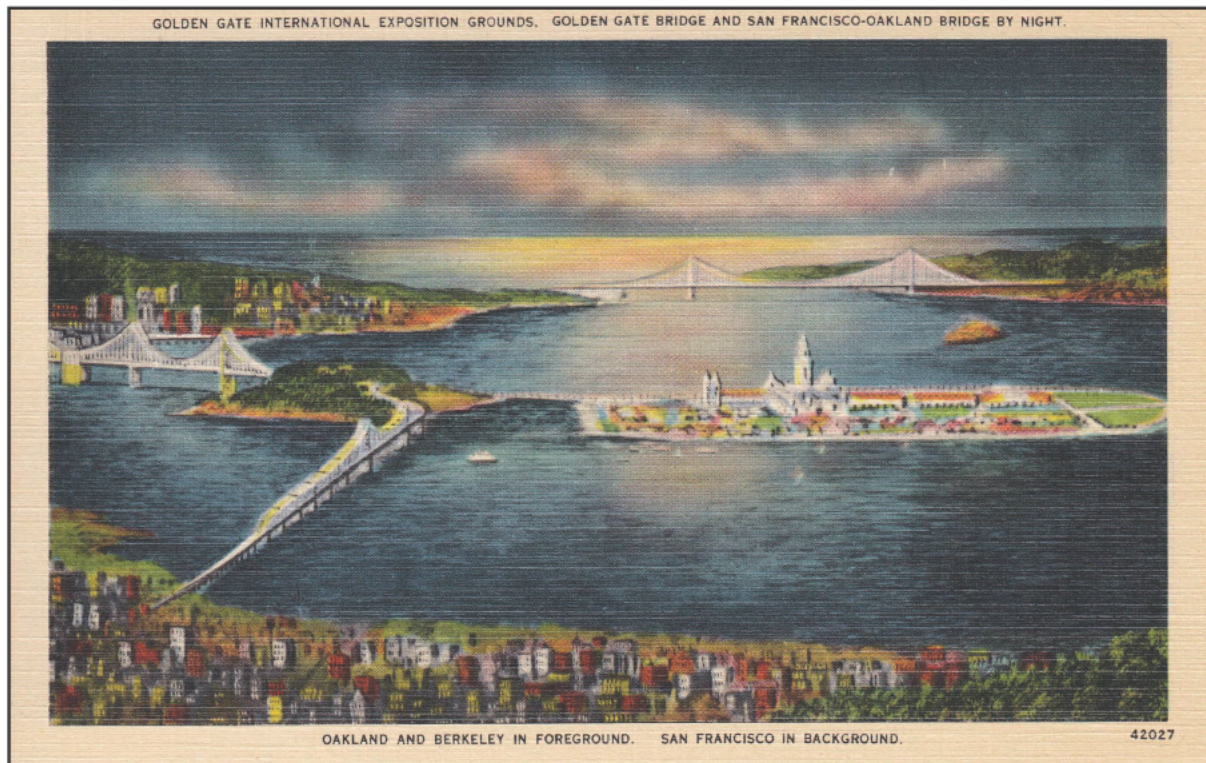
*Your average enrollee probably would have trouble getting four days off. As a general rule, you said Saturday afternoons and Sundays were your scheduled days off.*

That would be it. I know the opportunity came up, and I imagine the educational





Education Advisor Albert Vales and Calvin Cushing attended the Golden Gate International Expo in 1939. Vale collected giant pinecones from Ponderosa Pines while crossing the Sierra Nevada Range. (Courtesy of Calvin Cushing)



Vintage postcard shows the Golden Gate International Expo grounds on the manmade Treasure Island in the center of San Francisco Bay. (Courtesy of R. Kolvet)



advisor helped as much as anybody else to get the other men and me to go along with him, because we drove from Wells to San Francisco.

*Did they have religious services at the camp? I think some CCC camps did.*

I imagine some boys probably went to church in Wells, but I don't ever remember myself. As far as having a Sunday... I don't think it was done out there.

*You mentioned trips to Twin Falls, Idaho, too.*

Well, we'd go to Twin Falls as well as to Wells. When we went to Twin Falls, it was more or less over the weekend. We'd go up there and stay at a hotel and eat and go to a couple of movies and then come back the next day.

*What was your reason for leaving the CCC? Could you have stayed longer, or did you just decide that you were ready to go back?*

To be truthful, my mother wanted me to come back home, but I guess it was time to go, too—it was two years that I was there. It was time to give somebody else the chance to do the job I did. I went back home in 1940, and I think at that time I had a chance to get a job, which I worked at until I went in the service in 1942. I guess that was probably the main reason. Although I heard that others took them right from the CC camp and took them in the service.

*There were other people at Hubbard. I think after you left there were two later groups that I have somewhere here. I think they were there until later, close to 1942. You were in camp 1685, but there was a camp 5726 and then*

*2539, and they were there until July of 1942. Hubbard Ranch camps were disassembled because of the war. You mentioned that you went into the marines later on?*

Yes. I went home and went to work. In April of 1942 I volunteered to go in the Marine Corps.

*Do you think that your CCC training and the supervisory experience helped you?*

I'm sure it did, because I knew about regulations and rules and how you were supposed to act when you were in the service. I'm sure that it helped in a lot of ways.

*How different was the CCC camp from a military camp?*

In the CC camp you had reveille and retreat and inspection, but no other military activity, such as saluting or marching. You did have retreat and reveille when the flag was raised and lowered and when you had inspections of your barracks and your personal gear, so it gave you a responsibility to know when you went in the service what you had to do at that time.

*Did you wear uniforms all the time?*

No, you could have civilian clothes. If you wanted to go on liberty in the town and if you wanted to dress in civilian clothes, you could. Otherwise, you could wear your uniform that you had in the CC camp.

*You mentioned when you were in the Marines that you went back to Nevada.*

I went back to Hawthorne, Nevada, to a naval ammunition depot.

*That was in 1942?*

Nineteen forty-two, probably in July. I spent three or four months there and then was sent back to the West Coast for more military training.

*What did you think about Hawthorne?*

In Hawthorne, we were in a more modern barracks. We had more modern facilities, but it was still kind of an isolated part of the country or state. The scenic part of Nevada was few and far between, because most of it was sagebrush. [laughter]

*Well, you mentioned on the phone that you might even have stayed in Nevada, but you mentioned that your mother was back in Illinois.*

Yes. I was gone for two years, so she kept saying, "Well, come on back home." I thought at that time in the 1940s Nevada would have been a good state to see what you could do out there.

*Tell me how you got involved with Joe Mellan. You were saying Joe Mellan and at Tonopah.*

He was one of our camp field managers, and he lived in Tonopah, Nevada. On weekends he would go home and work on a gold mine that he had there. I got acquainted with him, and I did some odd jobs for him. He asked me if I wanted cash or stock or bond, and I figured I'd see what stock would do, so he gave me two hundred shares of Mellan's gold mine stock in Tonopah, Nevada. When I left Nevada, I never heard any more from Mr. Mellan until after the war. I found out that he was deceased at that time, but his wife wrote and said that they had litigation against the

government because they'd taken over the gold mine that they had at Tonopah.

*It was on Nellis Air Force range, and it was sitting there. Nobody was working it. That's interesting that he traveled that far every weekend, because between Tonopah and Wells, that's quite a distance.*

That's got to be two hundred miles.

*At least. I'm amazed, but when you worked on his mine, was that on your days off?*

I did most of the work around the camp, doing paperwork for him. [Chronicler's note: I did not work at the mine. What work I did for him was at Hubbard Ranch.] He would go home, like most of the men did that lived in that area. They'd go to wherever they lived. They left on a Friday night after work and then came back to be in camp for Monday morning's work detail. They worked five days a week, and they lived in the camp for those five days. He was the only one that I remembered out of the bunch of men that worked, but I'm sure all of them lived in different parts of the state, so that they could go back and forth to home, because most of them had families at that time.

*Was he considered an LEM, local experienced man?*

I imagine he was. I'm sure the superintendent of camp brought in men that could do different work in the field, but it seemed like they were all mostly in their forties, to do that kind of work. They were in charge of a work detail, and I guess that was the gist of what they did. They had to answer to the superintendent to make sure the job was done. They'd just stay in camp for the five

days, and then like Mr. Mellan, he'd go down to Tonopah to work on the mine a little bit. Back then everything was sort of primitive for what he had to do

*Do you remember Mr. Mellan going out in the field with the boys?*

I'm sure he did.

*He would maybe supervise the road building?*

I'm sure he supervised.

*Mr. Cushing, I wanted to summarize on what your impressions overall were of the CCC as far as health care, job skills, how it helped your family and world view, and how it helped you later in life. This is a big, broad question, but I'm sure you have some strong feelings about the experience you had.*

The experience mostly was to be in a large group of people your own age. We learned how to tolerate difference. As far as health, we got adequate health benefits. We learned how to get along with people, how to take orders, and then to be in charge of a group of people. I think it helped most of us that were in the CC camp to grow up and to accept our responsibilities; we had to go into the service or any other civilian job. I think it was beneficial to me. I don't think there were any bad parts of CC camp as far as I was concerned.

*Well, I talked to Marta Griffith, who is affiliated with the Hubbard Ranch. I just talked to her last week, and she was telling me about the roads and the earthen dams that were built by the camps out there and how they continue to be useful to their ranch, how they continue to use them, and how to this day they're still*

*kind of the focal point of the ranch, because it allows them to have water and to capture water that comes down out of the ranges around there. She spoke very favorably about the CCC, and she's a local person there, so I think as far as the people there, even though it didn't sound like there was a lot of interaction, they have favorable memories. Also, the work that was done by the camp is still there and in use today, which I think is pretty remarkable even after sixty years.*

Well, we have right across the river Pierre Marquette Park, which is a camp that was built by CC people, and it's still being utilized for a lot of people's activities. I was in Colorado, and a CC camp built a big amplified theater out there at Red Rock. In general, I think the public and the men—all of us—got an education, and we did more good than we did bad. The people I talked to that were in a CC camp—or was in a CC camp—all of us have good memories. We remember the fun.

Of course, you had work, but I think it was well worth whatever money the government spent to get it all going. When the war came along, we had fairly good responsibilities going into the service, and we got along well with our people that we had to work with.

*It looked like you had a lot of camaraderie with other camps. The baseball pictures you showed me had you with uniforms with the name of Hubbard Ranch on them. Who made those uniforms?*

I have no idea. Somebody did. We would go to these other camps, and they were men from other parts of the country. The main thing there was to play baseball and win. To me, it was a good activity for Saturday or Sunday, and we all looked forward to

traveling to the camps. They fed us and gave us a place to sleep, so we were treated just like any member of their camp.

*Yes, that baseball seems to be a memory for a lot of CCC people that we've talked to. They remember the camaraderie and the recreation and playing with these other people, which was probably their only exposure to other camps and the people. Do you remember other times, than just the baseball games, when you got together with the other camps in the area?*

No, because I think at that time in the 1930s, baseball was what all of us could play, and that was the main sport at that time. Like, we never had basketball; we never had football teams. It just seemed like baseball was where you could get nine men to make up a team and go out and play. Whether you were good or bad, you played, and you played to the best of your ability.

*Was it very competitive?*

Sure. We liked to win. That was the name of the game. You *always* wanted to win, and looking back, you had very competitive times when you wanted to do the best of your ability. Sometimes you won, sometimes you lost, but I enjoyed every bit of it.

*Do you have any particularly bad memories of the CCC experience?*

I can't think of one bad memory of being out there. I'm sure there were some, but it sure didn't stick in my mind.

*When you went to the war and joined the marines, did you find that there were some similarities from what you'd done before?*

No, there was no similarity between being a marine and being in a CC camp, but I did meet two friends of mine that were at Camp Hubbard Ranch. I had one that worked with me for a year or a year and a half, and we went through a basic marine operation in the South Pacific. The other one, we just met. He was coming and I was going, and that was the gist of that. I never did see him before or after, but there were many people that went into the army, the navy, and the Marine Corps that were in CC camps, and it helped; it didn't hurt anybody.

*Do you think many of them stayed in Nevada?*

I know only two: one was George Stodoha. He stayed in Wells, Nevada, and the other boy married a girl from Twin Falls, Idaho; his name was Joe Keller, but I haven't heard from either one since the CC camp, so one could be living in Wells, Nevada, and the other one could be living in Twin Falls, Idaho.

*Do you ever hear from any of the people, the enrollees?*

No, I haven't heard. I heard from a few before the war, but after that, we forgot each other, I guess. There was a boy that lived over in Coulterville, Illinois. He was out there at Wells, but I haven't seen him in thirty or forty years, either.

*Do you think you changed much during those two years?*

I probably grew up. I hope I learned something. Otherwise, it would be two years wasted.

*[laughter] OK. Thank you, Mr. Cushing.*

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MICHAEL DECARLO

*Victoria Ford: Today is October 3, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford, and I will be conducting a phone interview with Michael DeCarlo about the CCC camps in northern Nevada. The first question that I wanted to ask you is where you lived at the time you went into the CCC program?*

Michael DeCarlo: At the time I went in, I lived in Schenectady, New York.

*With your parents?*

With my parents, yes.

*What did your parents do for work?*

My father worked at the General Electric Company, and my mother stayed home and took care of the kids.

*How many brothers and sisters did you have?*

There were eight of us.

*Was the Depression having any impact on your family?*

Yes, but we had food because my mother and we kids used to work in a garden. We had a few lots across that we borrowed from the people that had some land there that had trees or something. We cleaned it up and planted potatoes and everything in it. We lived that way. My people never took any welfare.

*So, that was good... you had gardening to give you food.*

Yes, we had the gardening and canned and preserved everything.

*How did you learn about the CCC program?*

In 1933, President Roosevelt had started a program, and my brother—he was about seven or eight years older than me. He's a half-brother of mine, and he went in the CCC camps when it first started. In 1933, he went to

Idaho. Those people went to Idaho first, and then when he was in Idaho, he got transferred down to Nashville, Tennessee. Then, he stayed about a year, or six months. They had to go six months at a time.

*So he did six months in Idaho and six months in Tennessee?*

Well, I don't know how long he stayed in there, but usually when you join the CCC camps, it's for six months. When I went in 1939, I joined out of Schenectady, and my friends joined, too—there were two other friends of mine, close buddies of mine—and we went to a CC camp in Averill Park, New York. I stayed there only three months, and then I signed up to go West.

When I signed up to go West, they signed up to go West. When we left, there was about ten of us from the camp that went West, but I was the only one that went to Fallon. My other two friends went to Hawthorne. I lost my trunk with my clothes, and it went where they were down south. They hitchhiked a ride—I don't know how long it took them—from Hawthorne to come up to Fallon to bring my trunk up there. I still got the trunk today.

*Did you go by train out to Nevada?*

Well, we went to Ft. Dix, Nevada, first. That's where all the people got on a troop train, and the troop train takes four days and four nights to go out there.

*What was it like on that troop train?*

I don't know what it was like. [laughter] You're young so you don't know about it. You got a sleeping berth so you could sleep, and we all had that, you know. I don't know how many of us got on the train to go. There were

at least a hundred for the camp on that train. They had cooks—the CC cooks. When the troop trains were going, they'd take a couple cooks from the camp, who got to cook on the train—for the trains going back East.

*Did you eat pretty good on the train?*

To me everything was good. I never complain about food.

*When you got to Fallon, tell me what it was like. It was the first time you had seen Nevada?*

Yes, it was the first time I saw it. You know, all the states were different. You go through the corn belt, and all that, through the Chicago corn belt. Then, in Nevada you see a lot of sagebrush.

*What did you think of it when you first saw it?*

It was an experience for me. I just liked it.

*What kind of work did you do at the camp?*

When I started, I think I was only out in the field for about a month or two, because I worked on irrigation. They did a lot of irrigation there.

Then one morning when we were all lined up to work, they came out in the line, and they called my name, "DeCarlo," and I called back. They asked, "Well, come on. You want to learn how to become a cook?"

I said, "Yes."

That's how I stayed in the kitchen. At that time when I stayed in Fallon, there was a cooking school for other camps. Some used to come there and learn how to cook, and the reason why they learned was because in the fall they had their forest fires, like you have





Enrollees gather boulders to line or “rip rap” the sides of irrigation canals and dam outlets. (Courtesy of Armando DeCarlo)



Michael DeCarlo and his son Armando visited Carson City and Fallon in 2001. DeCarlo posed on an irrigation structure built by Camp Carson River in 1940. (Courtesy of Armando DeCarlo)

here in Reno. My camp was Camp Carson 1225. I had to look it up on my chart there.

When it came to fall, they used to hold meetings in the mess hall to talk to the young guys about how to fight forest fires. They never took me because I was too small, and then I was in the kitchen. What we used to do at these camps was to take a cook—one cook or two cooks—out of the camps when they brought in some more. They went to the summer camp. The people in Camp Carson went to fight the forest fires in Boca Dam at Truckee, California. That was our summer camp. I never went, but they got some of the people from the camps. They went there, and that's where they went to fight the forest fires.

I asked my son, "Do you know where Boca Dam is?"

And he said, "No, I don't."

I said, "That's where our summer camp was. The name was Boca Dam, Truckee, California."

You know where it is. That's where the boys used to go. They go there to fight forest fires, and then they come back to our camp. They come back home.

*Meanwhile, you stayed there and did cooking, right?*

Right. I never went.

*Did you train some other cooks?*

I didn't because I am a second cook. When they went to our camp, we got the first cooks.

Then there was another army man—I think he was an army man. He went to all those camps and checked their food and supplies.

*He was in charge of both the first cook and second cook then.*

Yes, each camp had two first cooks and two second cooks. We worked two days on and two days off, and the day started in the afternoon.

*Why did it start in the afternoon?*

It's always been like that. I think the army did it the same way. This thing was run by the army. The man in charge was a First Lieutenant at my camp.

*Do you remember his name?*

I only know his first name, Kenny, but I don't have the charts up there. If my son was up here, he could get all the charts and everything and look that up.

*That's all right. How long were you in Fallon then?*

I got there in January, and I got home to Schenectady at Christmas Eve. I got out of there about four days before Christmas Eve. We all went to Ft. Dix, New Jersey,—the troop train—and then we got our discharge from there.

I got my discharge from the CC Camps,—on there it said I was second cook and everything—and later on when I was twenty-two years old, twenty-three years old, the war broke out so I went to join a Merchant Marine in New York City. I went down to what you call the War Ship Administration, and I had my discharge with me. When I showed them I wanted to join and showed them my discharge, they asked, "You were a cook?"



I didn't know they were desperate for cooks, and I got it right away. A couple days later I was on a ship as a cook.

*That's how you spent the war, working with the Merchant Marines then?*

That's how I got in the Merchant Marines because that CC Camp where I was a cook helped me that way.

*It trained you that way. While you were cooking, were most of the other guys working on irrigation or fire fighting? Were those the two jobs that the other guys had?*

Yes, most of the time they're over there. They were mostly working on irrigation. I don't know how long they stayed out to fight

forest fires. Today, I go and ask myself, "Where do you get all these people to fight the forest fires today?" Before, it was all CC kids that used to fight forest fires.

*That must have been a big help.*

Now they get the army or somebody, you know?

*Yes. Did you ever go into town, into Fallon?*

Yes, I want to tell you another thing now. I went to town to Fallon, but another thing, on the weekends, on Saturday night, the truck took the people to Reno.

They didn't stay over night. They just went to visit, and they came back the same night. I used to go, too, when I didn't have to work. I



DeCarlo was trained as a camp cook. His newfound skills helped to land him a job with the Merchant Marines.  
(Courtesy of Armando DeCarlo)

would go to Reno, walk around, do anything, you know? You could see how far back I was there—I gave my son the picture that I have. I had a picture taken of the Reno arch? They moved that arch, I don't know how many times. I got the original in the old picture that I showed my son.

*Is that one that he has now?*

Yes, because he lives in Reno.

*OK. So, on Saturday night you came to Reno rather than into Fallon?*

Yes, because in Fallon there was nothing over there, only a little town. When I was in the CC camps, there were 85,000 people in the whole state of Nevada. That's the same population that they had in the city of Schenectady. The whole state had 86,000, and Schenectady had 86,000. When I was in Reno about five years ago, my son bought me a ticket to go there, and it's a lot different. Now it's all filled up from Reno to Sparks. Before, it wasn't like that. It was all open space. It's grown all these years, all these sixty years. The city is grown up.

*In addition to just walking around in Reno, did you go into any of the casinos or anything?*

Yes, I went into a casino. I only played once. At that time, they only had silver dollars, so I might have put a dollar on the dice table, because I never had any money to play.

*Why is that?*

In the CC Camps at that time, the people got five dollars a month, and twenty-five dollars a month went home to your parents. Being that I was assistant leader, I got five

dollars plus nine dollars more. You didn't have money to throw away, and that's all you get. If you're only a regular, though, you get only five dollars a month to spend.

*So you had little more than some of the other guys.*

Yes, but you didn't need any money. What would you do with it? You're over there and had food, so you had everything.

*Was there a canteen at your camp?*

They sold beer in that canteen—cigarettes, beer—and they had a pool table. They had a dice table. Do you remember the cook that I worked with, the first cook that I talked about?

Yes.

They had the dice table. It was illegal, you know? Well, they had the dice table over there. On pay day—we'd get paid once a month—he'd go there and help on the dice table, and I'd stay in the kitchen and run the kitchen. I stayed doing most of the work there, but when he was done taking care of the dice table, he'd come back and give me two dollars.

*Were there any other things that you guys did for fun? Did you have any sports or anything going on?*

I used to play baseball, and the Lieutenant used to play, too. He and I were playing either third base or second base. When we got out on the field, he asked me, "What do you want to play, third or second?"

"Well, whatever you want to play we play."

I didn't know that he was a Lieutenant, though. I knew he was a head of the company,

but he played baseball on our team. When they took the picture of the team, we won all the games. We played ten games, and our pictures were taken. Now the only ones not mentioned in that picture are he and me, because maybe I had to cook. I had to get up at four o'clock in the morning. I couldn't do everything like the other players.

*When you say you won all ten games, who did you play?*

I don't know. We played other local people.

*Did you play other small towns around there?*

I don't remember who it was. They had a loud speaker up there. They had a place up around the bleacher—like up there they had a loud speaker—where they watched the game and where the announcers of the players were. One of my officers—the second officer on the camp—used to go up there, and he'd say, "Five dollars for Camp Carson," if somebody wants to cover that bet. You could win five dollars every game. Then he'd take us, on the way coming home, and he'd stop in Fallon and buy us all a milkshake. I always ordered the same kind—pineapple.

*Do you remember where you got the shakes? The store or was it a drive-in?*

I think it was like an ice cream place.

*An ice cream store?*

I can't remember. It was in the town there somewhere.

*You said when you came into town you remembered going past Kent's, is that correct?*

Yes, I remember that place.

*That's evidently still there, yes?*

That's still there. My son has got the map, and it has Kent's on there.

*Is there anything else that you remember about the town of Fallon? Were the people nice to you in Fallon?*

Yes, but I didn't go much in Fallon. Another thing I know is that we were told that there were a lot of Indians around—and that we were never to buy them any liquor, like in a liquor store.

*Right.*

Yes, because there was a lot of Indians around. At that time, you know, but now it is different.

*Were there any Indians, Native Americans, in your camp?*

Not that I know of.

*No. Were most of the guys in your camp from the East then?*

Yes, most of them. There were only a few of us from upstate. There was only one other guy from Schenectady, and he was older than me. He was taking care of the trucks out there. The rest of them were all from New York City, and some from New Jersey.

*Did any of them get homesick?*

Well, if they really got homesick, they'd ship you back. At that time my two friends that went to Hawthorne didn't stay there long.

One fellow came back because he didn't like it. His brother, who was in business, wrote him a letter and said he needed him to help him out with business, so they sent him home. The other fellow said he wanted to go back to high school, and they sent him back home. It wasn't that strict, like an army where if you went there, you had to stay. There were other people in the CC Camp, and they studied high school. A lot of them hadn't finished school, so they studied high school, took night courses while they were in the CC Camps.

*Were you already finished with high school?*

I never finished high school.

*You didn't do the studying either, right?*

No, I didn't do anything.

*It might have been hard to do with your schedule. It was pretty different from the other guys.*

Yes, we were different, because the cooks slept in a different part. You got a barrack there, but then you had a separate room—like on the side of it—because you got to get woken up in the morning. You can't disturb all the other people. The guy that came, woke me up at four o'clock in the morning. That guy used to be the baker. The baker was up all night making sandwiches for the next day for the kids.

*To take in their lunches?*

Yes, they made lunches for all the kids. That was the baker's job—at night he did that, so in the morning, he woke us.



Michael DeCarlo (center) attempts to resolve problems between his fellow enrollees. The men from Company 1225 were from the state of New York. (Courtesy of Armando DeCarlo)

*What kinds of meals did you cook?*

Yes, I can remember a lot of them.

*Tell me some of them.*

Some mornings we made French toast, and some mornings we made hot cakes. Sometimes we made creamed beef for the mornings. Do you ever hear of creamed beef on toast?

Yes.

Then the other meals we had were roast beef, beef stew, and meat loaf.

*Did you have fresh fruits and vegetables?*

Yes, we had it. Every lunch we had fruit. You either got a banana, an apple, or an orange.

*Along with your sandwich?*

I didn't eat the sandwiches, because those were for the kids that went out in the field. All the sandwiches that went out in the field at lunch, each one had a fruit in it. All the food was good, whatever we had. In summertime when it was hot, we made iced tea, iced coffee, iced cocoa, and iced lemonade.

*Are there any other stories that you want to tell me about being at the CCC Camp? Did any of the guys ever get into fights?*

If you did, they had a ring right in that camp. They had a boxing ring in that camp. If you had a grudge, they would put you in the ring to fight, with boxing gloves. That's how you settled it, but you didn't have many. You had a lot of discipline -- that's how you

learned. If you learned discipline, you learned to take orders. We were young, and we had a lot of cocky kids there from the city and all that. They straightened out.

*This is great. You've done a great job of describing this to me. Is there anything that I should have talked about that I've missed?*

No.

*This sounds pretty good. Thank you.*





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## WILLIAM “W.D.” FERGUSON

*Victoria Ford: Today is October 4, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford and I will be doing an interview with William Ferguson of Oregon on the CCC experience in Nevada. OK, do you like to go by Ferg?*

William Ferguson: W.D.

W.D. OK.

Because when I went into the Navy and became a radio monkey, you had the choice of two initials to identify you in radio, and I used W.D. for twenty years and I still use it on my letters and stuff.

*OK, then that's what we will use. So, first thing I want to ask you is where you lived at the time you went into the CCC Program?*

Oakland, California.

*Oakland boy, yes?*

Yes.

*And, were you living with your family?*

Oh, yes.

*And tell me about your family. Were your parents employed?*

My mother wasn't. My dad was, but I forget what he was doing at the time, but you got to remember this was in Depression time. Just at the end of Depression.

*And what year was that?*

1939.

1939, OK.

The way to get out of Depression was to go into a war. Deliberately called by Franklin D. Roosevelt, but you don't want to hear that kind of stuff.

*OK. Well, and so, your dad was working, and how many brothers and sisters did you have?*



Photograph of 18 year old William "Bill" Ferguson wearing his CCC fatigues.  
(Courtesy of Lynda Ferguson)

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There were a total of seven kids. I had two sisters and five brothers.

*OK. Five boys and two girls, yes?*

But at that time in Oakland, that wasn't true. She only had five at that time.

*OK. And, how did you first hear about the CCC Program?*

Geez, Vikki, I don't recall.

*And where did you go into it? Do you remember the process of signing up?*

No, not at all. I still have my enlistment papers somewhere in this house.

OK.

Yes, but I only know the year 1939. I don't recall the details now.

*And how old were you then?*

Let's see, eighteen. Just got out of high school.

*Did you go immediately to Nevada then?*

No. I got out of high school in June, and went to Nevada in either November or December. Because I was there six months and when I got out I immediately went into the Navy. So, I joined the Navy in 1940, so six months in there somewhere.

*OK. And, where in Nevada did you go? Where was your CCC camp?*

Fallon.

*At Fallon?*

Well, at Camp Westgate.

*The name was Camp Westgate?*

Right.

*OK. So, you went to Fallon. What kind of work did you do there?*

Oh... making roads and sawing lumber and stuff like that. Some of my pictures will show us sawing logs or at least holding a saw, and working on the road up there. As I recall, that's all we did was making new roads and sawing logs and stuff like that.

*What do you remember about camp?*



Well, the thing that sticks in my mind and has for years is retreat. That's when you line up at night time and honor the flag and what have you.

*So it was a little bit of a military style thing.*

Right.

*OK. So, you did that every night?*

Oh yes.

*Yes. After you had been out working?*

Yes. And then we'd have our meal and then have retreat.

*About how many guys were there?*

If you want a flat out guess, I would say 200.

*And were they all doing the same kind of work that you were?*

No. Some of them were truck drivers. I got a picture. One of the pictures shows the camp's truck drivers - all of them in a group. And some of them were cooks, of course. They had their various jobs - whatever goes along with the military instillation, except the peons like me and the rest of the road workers. [laughter]

*The road workers, yes? [laughter]*

Yes.

*OK. Did you have any kinds of sports or things that you did for fun?*

No. Well, they had their poker games, of course. I never got too involved because it

wasn't that much money, or I didn't have that much money, but the one thing I do remember about those poker games is every pay day you go through the line. There are the guys — the winners — standing outside making sure that they get their money when you come off by that pay line. But they never got to me.

*You just didn't play?*

No. But, as far as fun, no, I don't remember. I never was one to get involved too much. I was kind of a loner. But, they used to go to town once a month - fifty miles into town and fifty miles back. I made one mention of a thing I recall. One of the members on one of those trips into town traded a pair of shoes for some sex. [laughter]

*For... [laughter]... traded shoes for sex, yes?*

Yes. [laughter]

*So, when you say fifty miles to town, did you come to Reno?*

No. Town wasn't Reno; town was Fallon.

*Were you fifty miles from Fallon?*

Yes. It was fifty miles east.

OK.

Westgate.

*OK, that makes sense.*

I got married in Reno, but... that's where I lost track there for a minute.

*Oh, OK. So, did you meet your wife while you were in the CCC Camp?*

Oh no. My third wife.

*That was later.*

Yes. I met her when she was working for the ambulance and I was working for the police department.

*OK. Tell me what you thought was the best thing about the CCC Camp. What was the best thing about your experience there?*

Let me tell you the worst first. It was my loneliness... homesickness. First time I had ever been away from home. And like in my... in that book, Focus, I used to go out to the desert at night time, be by myself, and cry a little bit because I was homesick. That was the worst. But, the best about camp, I don't know, it got me. Like I say, I was a loner, but

I got used to the idea of being around groups of fellows for the first time in my life, and it kind of prepared me for my life in the Navy. I spent twenty years in the Navy after that. I think that was the best thing.

*When you say you were lonely, did you get mail from your family?*

Oh yes.

*Were you real close to your brothers and sisters?*

No, not really, but I was close to my mother.

*So that was part of the homesickness?*

Oh yes.



After leaving the CCC, Bill Ferguson enlisted in the Navy and eventually became a Chief Petty Officer. He is shown here in 1945 with his brother Clarence, a Lt. JG.  
(Courtesy of Lynda Ferguson)

*Yes. But did you stay for your full six months?*

Oh yes.

*Were there other guys that were homesick?  
Did you ever know?*

I never noticed, no. I don't recall, anyway, I probably noticed at the time, because you can recognize it in others when you feel that way yourself.

*Yes, I think that was one of the big problems for the guys there.*

Oh, probably, yes. But the thing — this is off the subject at the moment — the thing that I remember the most was some of the fellows were from Brooklyn. Can you imagine that? All that way from Brooklyn come out to Fallon, but they had such a beautiful accent. I remember that.

*That would have been even further away from home.*

[laughter] Yes, I'll say, for them.

*Were there any Nevada boys in your camp?*

I don't know, dear, I really don't.

*Did you have a doctor at your camp?*

Yes. As a matter of fact, one of the pictures you'll see is the doctor.

*Do you remember his name?*

If you bear with me a minute, I'll see if it's on my picture.

OK.

I got a couple pictures of the mess hall. As a matter of fact, I got an arrow pointing where I used to sit.

*Did you always sit in the same place?*

Yes. Here. No, I just have him listed as "Doc".

OK.

And the "Louie" [lieutenant] and Charles Brown in one picture. And the lieutenant is making them... he's posing for a picture with a shovel in his hand. [laughter]

*OK. Well, it sounds like it ended up being an OK experience even though you were homesick?*

Oh yes. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I do now.

*Yes, OK. Those are all the questions I have. Did you have anything else that we needed to know about the CCC?*

One memory of the camp is that of a food strike we had that I believe only lasted one day. Quite frankly—and I'm quoting now—quite frankly I could never understand the rationale behind that strike. I sincerely believe most of us were eating better than we ever had at home.

*So, when you went on strike, nobody ate?*

Oh, yes. I think it lasted a day...at most.

*Then everybody got pretty hungry, yes?*

[laughter] Well, yes. There was no need for it. Here's another one: I remember the

foot races that ended with some of us lying by the side of the road struggling to breathe... sand, sagebrush, and scorpion, the welcome sound of the dance or the dinner bell, and the recreation hall and asking a piano player to play the "Missouri Waltz." So, I do have some memories.

*Well, those sound great. I'm going to stop the tape now. Thank you for your help.*

OK, dear.

RAYMOND FRY

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*Victoria Ford: Today is October 25, 2000, and I am doing a telephone interview with Raymond Fry. OK. You were going to tell me a little bit about the CCC camp. Where did you live in 1936?*

Raymond Fry: We moved over there from Ft. Churchill in April.

*You lived in Vacaville before?*

We left Vacaville and went to Meeks Bay, and in a few weeks they sent forty of us over to Ft. Churchill. There, we made brick and tried to build it up. I was out there last year, and it looked like they kind of crumbled down.

*It had looked better when you were working on it?*

I guess it's a little better, but we tried different mixtures of sand and clay. We finally thought we had pretty good brick, but I think some of them crumbled down last year when I

was there. We worked there that summer, and in the fall they sent us back to the main camp at Meeks Bay. Then we moved down to Wild Cat Canyon at Berkeley, and I quit and went home in 1937 in March, back to Missouri. It was a twenty-hour swing from Maryville, Missouri, to Fort Leavenworth, Texas. I was from Missouri.

*There were only about forty of you at Ft. Churchill?*

Yes, it was forty of us sent over from the main camp.

*Did you have camp buildings there, or did you camp in a tent?*

We had tents there. Last year my sons took me out there, but I couldn't figure out just where our tents were.

*You were there for the summer then. Who was in charge of that?*



Enrollees made tens of thousands of adobe bricks to restore the crumbling walls of Fort Churchill. (Courtesy of Richard E. Fry)

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I don't remember the superintendent and foreman. It was a Park Service, and we were under the Park Service.

*So the only work that you did was on the bricks?*

Yes. They dug clay out of one place, and we mixed them. We had a horse rented that turned the thing to mix the brick, and we molded them out on the ground, then covered them with sand, and let them dry for a few weeks. Then they went to pick them up.

*Was this the first time you'd ever made bricks as a young man?*

Yes. [laughter] My son took me over to Fort Leavenworth last week, and we're going back in a week or two there. They've got a lot of stuff on it—on Jefferson Barracks. I

got mixed up. We're going back over there, probably next week.

*Did you want to stay in Nevada at all when you were out here?*

Yes, I came almost to staying out there. I thought about it. The wages were a little better then, out there, than they were in Missouri.

*Was your family having a hard time back then?*

Yes, pretty hard to get enough to eat. A lot of farmers had WPA that they worked on; they got so much a week for whatever kind of work.

*Was your family in farming?*

Yes.



*How big was your family?*

There were eight children.

*That's a big family to feed during the Depression.*

Yes.

*Did you send some of your CCC money back to your family?*

Yes. We got five dollars at camp, and twenty-five went home to the folks.

*So that helped out, yes?*

That really helped them out. They could buy a lot with that twenty-five dollars.

*When you were out at your camp, did you have a doctor anywhere nearby?*

Yes, we had a doctor and a first aid in camp.

*Did you ever get to go to town?*

Yes, we'd go into Fallon about every weekend.

*What did you do there?*



Clay, straw and sand were mixed in a mill turned by enrollees. The adobe mixture was poured into molds and dried for several days before the bricks could be used.

(Courtesy of Richard E. Fry)

We went to picture shows.

*Did you ever have any dances?*

We went over to Hawthorne. The camp held a dance once, and that's the only time we got to go to a dance.

*Did you play any sports while you were there?*

We played some, and then we got out and walked. It was so hot that if we took a little walk very far, we had to take water with us. It was pretty hot in there around Churchill.

*Was it awfully hot while you were working, too?*

Yes, it was really hot. If you walked two or three miles, you had better take water.

*What made you decide to go back to Missouri?*

My folks lived in Missouri, close to Fulton, Missouri, and I got homesick, I guess.

*Did a lot of the boys get homesick?*

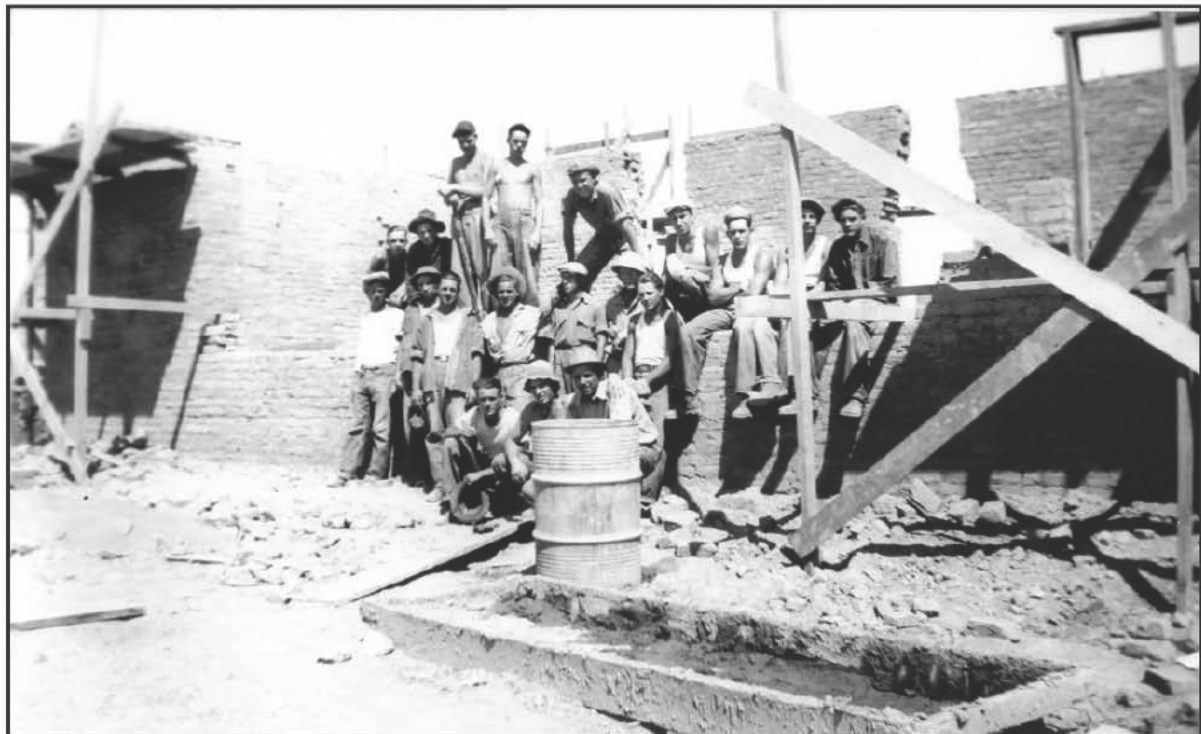
Not too many.

*But you did?*

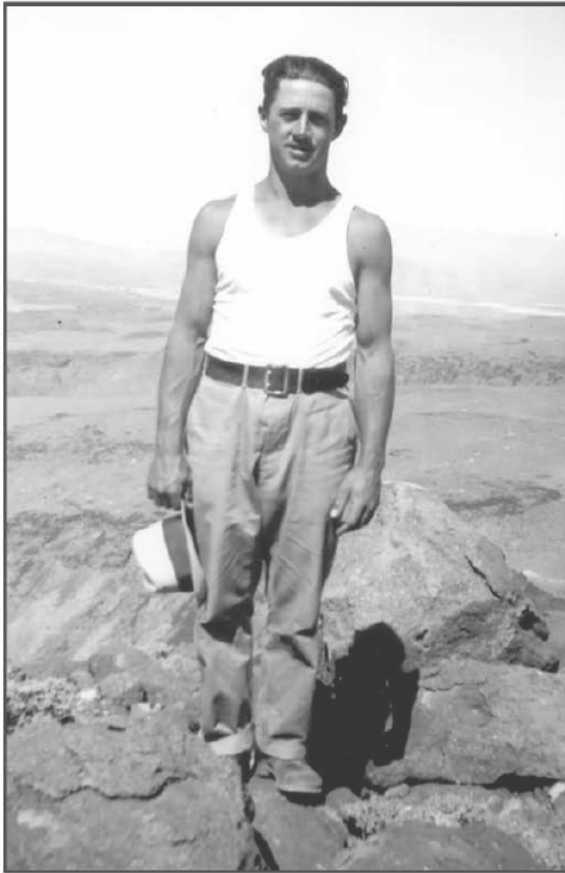
A little bit.

*It was pretty far away from home.*

Yes, back then that was. We went from Fort Leavenworth and made up a whole train load, and we went to Los Angeles and up the coast about to Vacaville. That was quite a ride for a lot of us. We hadn't been very far.



A CCC crew takes a photo break while restoring Fort Churchill in 1936. Raymond Fry is standing, third from the left in front row. (Courtesy of Richard E. Fry)



Many of the boys from the east and Midwest were fascinated by the mountains in Nevada. This photograph of Raymond Fry was taken on top of Churchill Butte near Fort Churchill.

(Courtesy of Richard E. Fry)

*How old were you then?*

I was twenty-one. A lot of them weren't but seventeen or eighteen.

*Yes, a lot of them were younger?*

Yes, from seventeen on up. A few of them were up in their twenties.

*Did you think that the CCC helped you in any way?*

I think that it was a real good thing that taught us discipline, because we were under army regulations in camp. Then at work, we were under the Park Service. In camp we had to stand inspection and retreat. If there was trash, we'd have to pick it up and be just like the regular army.

*Did you go into the military afterwards?*

No, I wasn't in the military. I guess I was on a job so they didn't take me in, and I had a brother that got killed in service. He was younger than I was.

*That's sad. Did you feel like the discipline was a good thing for you?*

Yes, it was a good thing. You can just tell when you met somebody who had been in, just by talking to them. You did what you had to do. You had to do everything right. You got up in the morning, and you had to make your bunk up and keep stuff cleaned. It was a good thing.

*Are there any special memories that you have of Ft. Churchill?*

I remember quite a bit about it.

*Tell me some more about it.*

I don't know if I can tell you a whole lot more. We just worked there and went for recreation in the town. My boys took me out to Virginia about two weeks ago, and I got a little book out there that had a whole lot of the CCC's in the East. It mentioned Ft. Churchill in there, but it didn't give any details about it.

*Yes, we don't know very much about it. It sounds like you were just a small spike camp?*

It was out of the main camp at Lake Tahoe. They sent forty over and called it a spike camp. Then we went back. Of course, it was over 200 in the main camp when we were all in there, and then we moved over to Berkeley, Wild Cat Canyon. I built trails and roads and even worked on a golf course down there in Oakland.

*You did quite a few things while you were out here.*

Yes. I worked some at Lake Tahoe in a park before they sent forty of us over there. I didn't work much there; it was only a couple weeks when they brought us back. We had to get out of there on account of the snow.

*You were at Ft. Churchill all summer, but then you had to get out of Tahoe because of the snow?*

Yes, at Lake Tahoe it snowed so much they moved us out early.

*Did you go back and forth between Ft. Churchill and Lake Tahoe, or did you just stay at Ft. Churchill most of the time?*

Ft. Churchill, small tents...

*You just were at Tahoe to come into the group and then when they moved you back out?*

Yes, when we went in the fall, we went back to Lake Tahoe, and then in a couple weeks they moved the whole camp out. We understood then there weren't anything but caretakers who stayed there around Lake Tahoe at that time. In later years, we were out there. There's a lot of population there now. When I was out there, they claimed that sometimes it snowed fifteen or twenty feet in the winter time. I don't know if it snows that

much. My boys took me out last year, and we stayed there at Truckee, there at Lake Tahoe, and it was getting pretty cold then. I was up last September.

*When you say you remember a lot, do you think back on it as a good time, when you were at Ft. Churchill?*

Yes, I really enjoyed going back. I'm getting plenty old now. I'm eighty-seven, but my sons take me down.

*So, you've been back out to visit several times?*

About three times. It had been about fifteen years since I'd been there last year. It's sure built up.

*Yes, it has.*



RALPH N. HASH

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*Victoria Ford: Today is June 20 in the year 2000. My name is Victoria Ford, and I'm here with Ralph Hash in his home in Reno. We're going to be talking about his experience in the CCC camps. Let's start with a little bit of background about you. Tell me where you came from and a little bit about what was going on with your family.*

Ralph N. Hash: Well, when I enrolled in the CCC's, I lived in Missouri. And the reason we were there was my father was a farmer in Iowa and was poor. He started out in debt and never got out when the Depression hit. He finally gave up and moved the family to Missouri when I finished my freshman year in high school, and I finished out high school in Missouri. Depression was still on and terribly bad through the Midwest. It was so bad that my father.... On top of that we had crop failure, two droughts.

*While he was farming?*

While he was farming in Missouri.

*In Missouri? OK.*

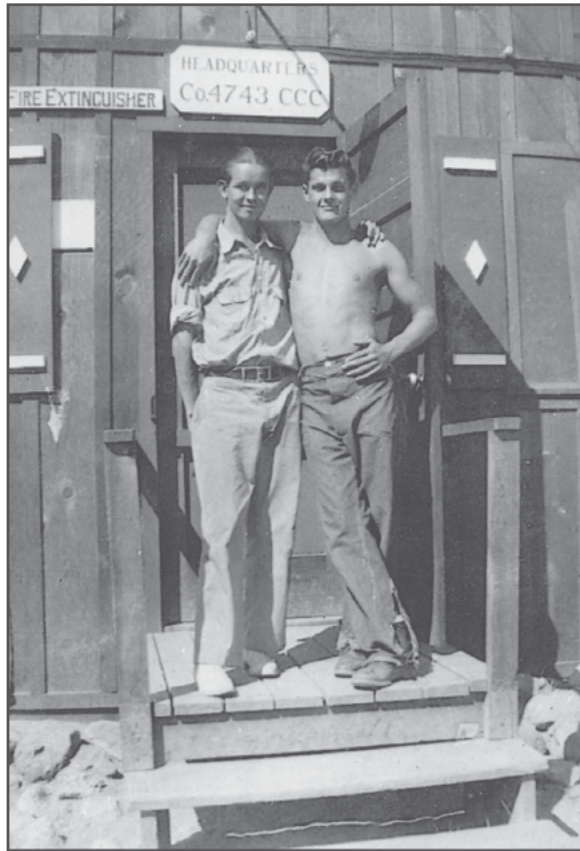
It was early that fall or late summer that he and another neighbor started to hobo into Canada, to hire out and work the harvest fields—wheat, in Canada—working their way down by the day. When I got out of school, I was taking care of the farm, what we had, and....

*So he left it entirely up to you.*

Yes, I took care of it while he was gone. I was *the* farmer then. I was a senior in high school, just.... Well, I graduated that year.

*What were you, about seventeen or eighteen by then?*

Seventeen. I graduated when I was eighteen in 1935. Things were still terrible, so I had an aunt that lived in Moberly, Missouri, a larger town close to us. She'd heard about the CCC, so she told mother. Mother thought it was a good idea, so they loaded me in the car



Ralph Hash (on right) poses with a young army officer at Camp Newlands in Fallon.  
(Courtesy of Ralph Hash)

and took me to Moberly, and I enlisted in the CCC's.

*Did you think it was a good idea?*

Oh, I thought it was wonderful. At the time the idea, when I originally enrolled, was the money I would make there... the folks were going to lay away for me, and I could go to college when I got out, which I wanted to do desperately.

Well, as it turned out, things didn't work out that way. The pay was the same as army pay at that time, a dollar a day, so I got thirty

dollars a month. The way they worked that was the enrollee got five dollars and twenty-five dollars went home to his folks every month. Things were so bad that, for a year and a half, my parents lived on my twenty-five dollars. So, there was never a chance for me going to college, which I wanted so badly.

*Were there other kids at home, too? Did you have brothers and sisters?*

Oh, yes. I was the oldest, and then I had three sisters in between; my brother was the youngest. If it hadn't been for that money, I don't know what they'd have done.

*I was curious about when you said that your dad went to Canada hoboing. Was he able to send any money home from that work?*

Yes, a little. He saved it up, and what they didn't send home, they hid in their sock or shoe or something to get it home. He saved every penny he made up there.

*By the time you went into the CCC, had your dad returned?*

No, he was still in Canada working when I left.

*So who took care of the farm when you left?*

Well, mother and my oldest sister took care of it after that, until Dad got back, which was.... I think he got back about a month after I left. As I remember, I left in early September. Nineteen thirty-five. August or September of 1935 I left.

*Tell me, when you said you went and enlisted at Moberly, what kind of a process was that?*



Well, the whole CC system was patterned after the army. They thought that was the easiest way of setting this whole program up and handling it. They decided that they would get retired military officers to command the companies. There was an awful lot of surplus equipment that the army had, so they put that to work. We had regular army issue clothing, and, as I say, army officers were our commanding officers. It wasn't operated exactly like the military, though; they didn't have the complete authority over us that an officer would in the army. They were still the boss, and we had to toe the line. Probably the major penalty they could have given us... if we were unruly and couldn't get along, they just sent us home. That was all the options they had.

*They didn't have the option to court martial and that kind of thing.*

Oh, no courts or jails or anything like that. We operated more or less on the principle of an army post. We had three meals a day in the mess hall, just like the army. Every evening we had taps and lowered the flag; it was the same thing in the morning. I blew the bugle when we woke up. Like I say, it was patterned after a military operation, but we weren't as strict as the military would have been.

It was the greatest thing in the world for a bunch of young kids, who just left home. A lot of the kids were from the city and in worse straits than we were as farmers. They'd get them off the streets and up here. They got a little discipline. They were making some money, and they got a job. It was just great. It was the greatest thing in the world for young men.

*Yes. OK. That's great. When you enlisted you went to Moberly, and you went into....*

Yes, they called.... I come home and, I think, about a week later, of course, we went in. We gathered there....

*Did you have to go through physicals and all the stuff like a military?*

Oh, no. The only thing we got, after we got in the camp and got set up... we got a couple of shots. No physical or anything like that.

*OK. So you just basically signed up and gathered there.*

Signed up, yes. We gathered there, and they put us on a train. They shipped all of our outfit to Bemidji, Minnesota. All companies were attached to some organization that they worked under. And Bemidji... we were attached to the U.S. Forest Service, and we worked under them there.

*OK. So you started out your work there.*

Yes, I started out my work there. It was a new camp. The barracks wasn't even completed when we moved in, so they were building as we were living there. Our job with the Forest Service there was what they call roadside clean-up—very heavy, timbered country; and brush and undergrowth growing right up to the highways. They wanted to clean that back something like a couple of hundred feet on each side, so that, in case of a fire, they'd have a little control and be able to get through there without getting stopped. That was our job—roadside clean-up. We worked in that all winter long. We dug brush and dead trees and stuff out of nine foot of snow and piled them in stacks and burned them. All winter, except when it got too cold. When it got thirty below, we didn't have to work, and it got *below* thirty below for about a month there.

In fact, we shipped out of there the next... early part of the year—I forget now, February or March, somewhere in that.... That Christmas it was forty-four below, and we had nine foot of snow on the ground, level. That's winter. [laughter]

*That is definitely winter. Had you ever been in anything like that before?*

Well, northern Iowa is pretty rough, too, but not that bad, no.

So then, the next spring, they decide to move us, so they transferred the whole troop to Gala [sp?], Nevada.

*OK. Boy, talk about contrast! [laughter]*

Well, we all had terrible colds when we got here. We got out here.... I forget now. It's around February or March, and in Fallon we were attached to the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District; we worked under them. Our job, the reason they had us there, was that irrigation system. That's where our company got its name—Camp Newlands, the Newland project. That had been started in the end of World War I—1917, 1918, somewhere in there—and it hadn't had a lot of maintenance, because they didn't have the help. The canals that carried the water were becoming overgrown with brush and willows; and the locks, where they stopped the water and diverted it out into a field, were all wooden; they were rotting out. Our job was to clean canals and, in some places, to build new locks out of cement. That was working under Truckee-Carson Irrigation District. That was a job.

*Those were your jobs. Let's talk about these jobs a little bit here. When you got started, who showed you what you had to do?*

Well, that's where these, what I call "state men," or the four people that were hired that were civilians.... They were experienced foresters in some part of their lives, so they knew what.... They were attached (maybe all of them, I don't know) at one time to the Forest Service. Just like here, now all of the people that we were working under in Fallon were all men that had previous experience working with irrigation and canals. They were all experienced professionals, like I say, half of them retired and then were called back to work.

*Yes. So both the military men and these state men, they all had experience with...?*

Yes, the military men.... Actually, our commander, the only thing he worried about was the operation of the base, the camp. That's all he was concerned with. He had nothing to do with job assignment. He didn't care whether the guys worked or not. His job was strictly running the base, maintaining discipline, order supplies, and payroll. He just ran the camp, that's all.

*OK. So when you first came to Fallon, what was your first impression?*

Well, I tell you, my heart almost sank. We came by rail, Southern Pacific, and we came into Hazen. The main line... of course, Southern Pacific, comes through Hazen, but there was a little splitter line off of Hazen that ran to Fallon, because they had a little "tooterville trotter" that run from Reno to Fallon. Well, they pull us on the siding there out of Hazen, and there we sit, in the middle of the afternoon. We looked out there, and there was nothing but old, white alkali flats and the scrubby brush here and there. I go,

"Oh, are we going to be stationed here? What in the world...?"

Well, everybody was about to panic. We sat there for about two hours before they got an engine out from Fallon to haul us all into Fallon. Once we got there, it was fine. That's a beautiful little town, because I didn't know anything but little towns anyway. *Beautiful*. Yes, I was really tickled.

*Fallon had some trees and some green so it wasn't so desolate.*

It had trees and lawns. It was a little town of about, oh, less than two thousand, I guess, when we came here. You wouldn't even know it today. I don't. I don't even know where Main Street is, it's so big.

*Yes, it's really grown.*

I liked a little town.

*Did you go into Fallon and then straight to the camp?*

Yes. Well, our camp was right next to the railroad. Our camp was built right on the Truckee Irrigation District Yards; it was part of the yards, and the railroad ran through right there. We got off right there at camp.

*Was it already... You said the one in Bemidji was not built.*

It was completed, yes, but as far as I remember, we were the first company in it.

*OK. This would have been in the spring of 1936 then?*

Nineteen thirty-six.

*What job did you start on?*

Well, I started out as a... I say plain labor out in the field. What we did, we had crews. Part of us had about eight ton-and-a-half dump trucks assigned to us, and to each truck we had about ten men assigned to the truck.

A day's work was usually like this: we'd load up in the morning and go out to wherever they're working, overhauling some of the banks of the canals that carried the water. They'd clean the brush out and were overhauling some of them. Some of them had to be filled in with a little more sand and dirt. We were the work crew that shuttled sand in the dump. It was hauled and dumped. We didn't have such things as loaders then. We did it with a good old shovel. [laughter]

*All by hand, yes.*

So that's what I did for awhile. Then I heard a rumor around that there was an opening in camp, and they needed an orderly for the state men who lived in camp. Each had their own quarters and their own toilet, and they ate at the mess hall with the group, but they had their own table. The orderly's job was to clean their quarters, mop the floors, make their beds, change their linen, tidy up, and feed them all their meals. I served them all their meals. Otherwise, I had free time. Boy, I had a gravy train.

*You liked that job.*

I lucked out on that one.

*How did you get it, when there was a job like that open? Did you apply for it?*

I just dashed in, and they said, “Ah, well, you’re hired.”

*It was all by volunteering.*

Most of it.

*Were your hours shorter than the other guys or different than...?*

Oh, the actual work hours were quite a bit different. Yes, they put in, more or less, an eight-hour day. Work time for me was not over half that.

*About four hours a day.*

Yes.

*Was it sort of sporadically throughout the day? I mean, if you served meals.*

Well, I did all of the tidying up of the quarters and mopping and cleaning, making beds, and all that stuff in the morning. Basically, in the afternoon, I was pretty much free. Of course, when the rest of the guys were through, laying around the, ... I was still cleaning up the rest of the dishes and taking care of it, but that didn’t take long either. I only had four men, you know. Of course, I ate with them, too, so.... That was one time when it pays to volunteer. They say in the army, “Never volunteer.” This one time it was a good idea. [laughter]

*So you got there in the spring of 1936, and then how long were you there?*

I was thinking I was there longer, but I wasn’t. I got this job and came to Reno in the latter part of March of 1937, so I was only there about a year, roughly.

*All that time, after that first period when you were out in the fields, you were the orderly then.*

Yes, I was the orderly.

*OK. I’d like to just talk a little bit more about the camp, some things about what the days were like and what the conditions were like—the barracks, the food.*

Well, to me, we didn’t have anything at home; we were quite poor. Everything [in the camp] was real pleasant. We had comfortable bunks. Of course, they were good old army bunks, but, if I can remember rightly, we had about thirty men to a barracks, I think, and they were in single bunks with an aisle down the center between.

*They were just single level, not bunk beds.*

No, just single beds. Then at the end of the barracks—just like the old army barracks—we had showers and toilets, which all were set up to accommodate, oh, at least six fellows at a time, so we had plenty of room. Like I say, we had... I think they sounded the wake-up call... I think seven o’clock in the morning.

If I remember right, we got up and leisurely dressed, went over to the mess hall, and had a leisurely breakfast. We had to be through with all that... we had to make up our bunks, too, every day, which didn’t take long. Eight o’clock, then they all gathered in the yard to load up in the various trucks and head out to the job, and the way they worked it was they’d have at least two trucks on a job together. They’d load all the fellows up, except two guys who volunteered to stay and watch our shovels and other equipment we had lying around. The rest of them were hauled back to camp and had lunch at camp.

Then the two guys who volunteered out there, they brought lunch back to them, so they had a gravy train, too. They slept for an hour, and then they had lunch before they went to work. [laughter]

Then they knocked off, as I remember, about 4:00. Time they got back to camp, put the trucks away, and got everything tidied up, they'd put in their day.

Then I think we had supper at about six o'clock, I'd say. After that, they sounded taps and took the flag down, and then you're on your own.

*So you had some free time after supper.*

Oh, yes. One of the people in camp, they had an officer.... Well, actually they had two officers. We had a full-time doctor, which was a retired military. He was a commanding officer, and we had his assistant. Then we had one other man that had been a retired teacher. That way, if we hadn't finished high school, we could go ahead and get our high school diploma. That teacher would teach courses in the evening.

*Now, you had already graduated, is that right?*

I'd already graduated, so I never took advantage of that.

*How many people would use that?*

Well, they didn't have too many. I don't imagine he had over a half a dozen at any one time.

*How many barracks were there at the Camp Newlands?*

We had two hundred men in the camp, so I'd say we had at least seven barracks.

There were maybe eight, because we had one barracks that was set up as a recreation room.

They had some books in there you could read. They had a pool table, a piano, and just various little card tables. It was just strictly recreation. I think they had a ping-pong table there.

*So a few would do their studies, but everybody else would head to the rec room? What were the evenings like around there with the free time?*

In the evenings, of course, a lot of the guys would go downtown.

*Oh, they could do that? They didn't have to stay there?*

Oh, no, we could go off post. After taps you could go see a movie. We had athletic teams: we had a baseball team, a basketball team, and a softball team. In fact, our baseball team won the Nevada State amateur title in 1936. We had a terrific bunch of ball players down there.

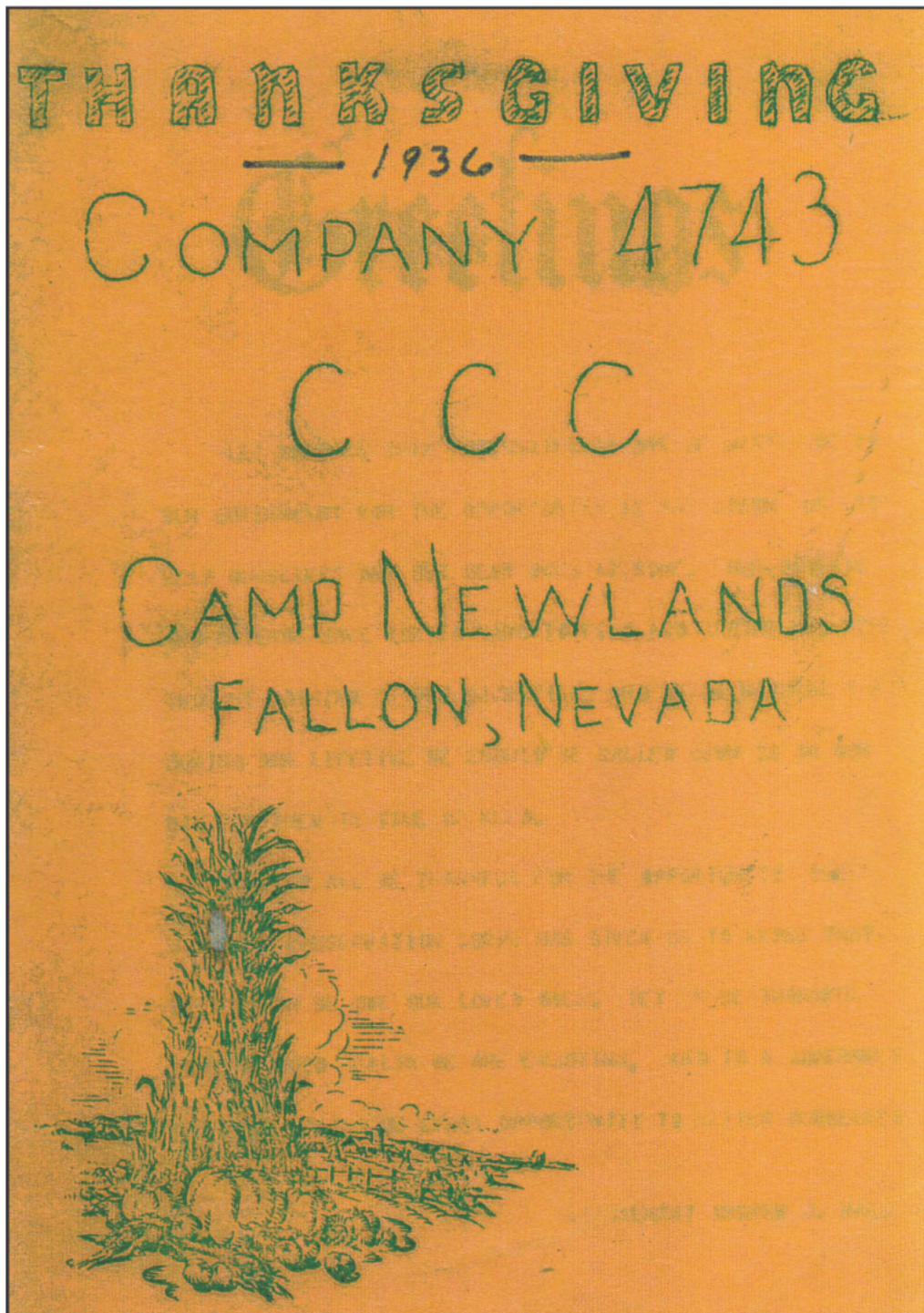
*Who all did you play to win that?*

Well, like here in Reno now, they have a regular summer league—town teams, you know, and that's who we played. We played... Fallon had a team, and Fernley had a team, Reno had a team, Hawthorne had a team, and the marines in Hawthorne had a team. We played a lot of teams. It was strictly an amateur....

*Were you in that? Did you play baseball?*

I played softball; I didn't play baseball. I was with the softball team. Our baseball team is the one that won the state title.





Cover of Camp Newlands Thanksgiving Day Program, 1936.  
The CCC-sponsored holiday activities including a traditional turkey dinner for enrollees who were far from home. (Courtesy of Ralph Hash)



# Greetings

LET US MAKE THIS THANKSGIVING DAY OF GRATITUDE TO OUR GOVERNMENT FOR THE OPPORTUNITY IT HAS GIVEN US TO HELP OURSELVES AND OUR DEAR ONES AT HOME. OUR PARENTS AND FRIENDS HAVE WORKED HARD TO FEED AND CLOTHE US. THEY THOUGHT NOTHING OF THE SACRIFICE, AND IT IS NATURAL THAT DURING OUR LIFETIME WE SHOULD BE CALLED UPON TO DO OUR BIT FOR THEM IN TIME OF NEED.

LET US ALL BE THANKFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS HAS GIVEN US TO REPAY THAT DEBT WHICH WE OWE OUR LOVED ONES. LET US BE THANKFUL FOR THE GOOD HEALTH WE ARE ENJOYING, AND TO A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS GIVING US EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO BETTER OURSELVES.

LIEUTENANT ANDREW J. MAES

*So when you went downtown, what kind of reception did you get from the locals?*

Open hand. They were just beautiful people. They accepted us. You'd think a lot of them would be worried about their daughters, dumping a bunch of young men into a little town like that, but they weren't, because we had a good group of boys. We never had any trouble with any of our fellows. Generally speaking, the town just accepted us with open arms. They were real pleasant.

*So you could pretty much come and go after work hours and....*

Oh, yes.

*Were you free on weekends, too?*

Weekends we were free, yes. Of course, nobody went anywhere, because we didn't have money or transportation. Well, a lot of the fellows had folks who were better to-do than mine, and their folks would turn around and send them their twenty-five dollars back, so they always had spending money, which was a lot of money then. While I was there, different people I met took me up to Lake Tahoe on the weekend. Oh, man, wasn't that something.

*You remember doing that?*

And then we went out to Lahontan. That was a recreation spot during the summer. They had a beautiful beach out there, a regular bathhouse where you could change suits and everything. Half the town went out to the beach area during the summer, so a lot of the fellows would go there.

*It sounds like, from your first impression, you started to get a different feeling about Nevada—from Fallon.*

Oh, yes. Well, I didn't know anything about it before. It was just a name to me. I didn't know anything about it.

*Right. Did you meet people who remained friends among the other CCC guys?*

Well, yes. I had one or two real close friends. Oh, three or four of them, of course, finally, through the years.... Finally, we've lost touch now. I don't have anybody anymore. In fact, one of the fellows, we double dated a few times. Then, when I got my job in Reno, he started looking around, and by golly, he landed one. About a month after I came in, he came and joined me. We had a little apartment, and we batched together for about a year before he went back to St. Louis where he was from.

*From Missouri also?*

Yes.

*What was his name?*

Art Endres.

*So that was a friend.*

Yes. That's about the only real close friend I had.

*Now, how was it that you got out of the CCC, by having a job?*

You enlisted for a two-year hitch, and the only way you could get out before your

term was up, was if you could come up with a guaranteed job. So this Peggy... she's from Fallon—her husband's....

*You're referring to Peggy Wheat.*

Wheat. Yes, we called Margaret "Peggy." Her husband's brother was... later years, had a clothing store, Hatton's. I don't know whether you're that far back for you or not.

*Hatton's?*

Yes, they were an old clothing store here. Well, he worked for Penney's at that time, but he was friendly with who my first boss was. They went to some lodge together or something, and he heard that they were looking for a delivery kid. He told Peggy, and Peggy thought, "Well, that's a whale of a good idea," so she bundled me in a car and brought me in for an interview, and they hired me.

*So you'd already met Peggy, over in Fallon?*

Oh, yes. Well, I met her about a month or two after I was there. How I met her, I went to church. My folks were good Baptists, and I had that instilled into me, so I attended church. The first Sunday there, I'm back in... the service is over, and some lady in front of me and her daughter turn..., "Ah, you got the most beautiful voice. Would you like to be in the choir?" I said, "Ha, no." See, but that's how I met Gladys. That was Gladys's mother. I mean, her mother introduced us, of course, and that was my first date. Gladys was a very close friend of Peggy, and she's the one that introduced me to Peggy. That's how I got to know her.

*I see. You met Gladys at church, and then Gladys introduced you to Peggy Wheat?*

Yes.

*What happened then? You became close friends?*

Well, we became close friends, and she was.... In fact, when I finally got the job in Reno... at that time she and her husband had been both going to University of Nevada, and she had quit. Her husband worked in the post office in Fallon and still managed to go in at nights, and whatever, and got his college degree at the University of Nevada.

Well, at this time, she was back going to university, driving in, taking a course at night or once a week or something. Anyway, she gathered all of my laundry up every week and took it home and did my laundry and ironed it for me and brought it back every week, because I didn't have many clothes. I had a change, you know. I didn't wear my so-called G.I. clothes. I had to have civilian clothes, so she took care of me for quite a while that way.

[November 10, 2000, conversation with Renee Corona Kolvet at his Reno home. Mr. Hash said Margaret married Wendel Wheat, who was an enrollee at the Newlands Camp. The two had much in common, and both loved working with Native Americans and exploring the outdoors. Hash credits Margaret Wheat as being responsible for him staying in Nevada. She told him about the job at Nevada Auto Supply in Reno in 1937. He left the CCC and took that job, which paid him about \$70 a month. By that time, his family in Missouri was back on their feet and didn't need him to send money home.]

*So for civilian clothes did you just have what you brought with you from Missouri, or did you have to buy some to go for this job?*



I had to buy some when I've got here. In fact, I had to send home to my dad and ask him if they could dig up a few bucks for me to buy an extra pair of pants and shirt. I didn't have a lot. Of course, my underclothes I could wear, but I didn't have anything else.

*I want to come back to your job and everything, but let's go back to Camp Newland. You were in camp taking care of these state's men, but tell me what was accomplished by those crews on this Newlands project.*

They completely... well, I'd almost say, rebuilt some of those main canals that carried the water out of Lahontan out to the various farms, because they were so overgrown with brush, willows. They had to chop all that out, dig a lot of that stuff out, and then truck in sand to reinforce the banks on a lot of areas. That's what they were doing all the time, working on those canals, because that was.... Well, that's the life blood of the farmers there. They had to have those canals working. That's where they got their water.

In fact, we had what they called a Spike Camp. We took thirty men from our main camp and moved them over to Mason, which was a little place just out of Yerington. It was the railroad depot for the Copper Belt Railroad. It was a little town at that time, and it had a hotel there. Our thirty men were stationed there and lived there, and they were attached again to the Walker River irrigation system, which is out of Hawthorne. Their job was.... The reason Lake Topaz is there, it's another damned-up lake. At the lower end of it, they had a drain and a cement canal, built underground through a cut in the mountain there, into where it dumped into the carrying canals below. Well, they had to get in during the off-season when the water was down. They had to completely clean that canal. It

was getting so filled up with silt and debris and junk. So that was their job. That was part of our crew, too, for a while, and they lived in Mason and worked out of there, and then still with an irrigation outfit, of course.

*Yes. Yes. That was pretty valuable work to that area.*

Oh, it was crucial, because they're all farm areas, and without irrigation they haven't got anything.

*It is quite a bit different than the Midwest where you depend on rain.*

Oh, yes. That was the basis of the whole CCC operation. They were attached to all kinds of organizations all over the United States—state park systems, forest service, you name it. There were just many different areas that they worked in.

One thing they did here in Reno is they're responsible for part of the construction of Virginia Lake. That was the CCC boys that built.... I don't know anything about the group here, but that was one of the things they did here locally.

*You knew about that project, though.*

Oh, yes.

*Some of these boys must have, and the camps must have had a pretty good reputation then. You said you were welcome in Fallon and....*

Oh, well, at least all of our group was. I don't know about all over the country, whether they had trouble with any of them or not. I think we were more welcome in Fallon than the boys out at the other camp, because they were all from New Jersey; that's

a different breed of people back there again, you know, when you come into a little farming community. We were far better accepted than they were, because most of us were just a bunch of country boys to start with, you know.

*So being in a farming community was....*

That made it real good for us, yes. We were *much* better received than they were. They didn't have any trouble with the kids. They were good kids, too.

*Just a little different. What would you say is the main thing that you learned while you were in the CCC camps?*

Well, I think I learned to make decisions and get by on my own and more or less formulate what I might want to do with my life, you know. I grew up, you might say. That's where you grew up and matured, and that was true of most of the boys, I think.

*How did that happen? Were there people there who guided you, or it was just a chance to be out on your own?*

No. If we had problems, we could.... Oh! One guy I forgot. We had a... no, it wasn't a minister either. If we had problems, we could go and talk to the one that was a teacher and everything. He served as a counselor if we had problems. Of course, in my case—and for a lot of the others—you could always talk to the minister at the church, you know. Other than that, we didn't have any... basically, people that were trying to give us guidance, no.

*It was more a matter of being out on your own and being responsible for a job?*

That's right.

*Anything else that you can think of that was helpful to you?*

Well, I suppose when you look back on... a depression is a terrible thing, and I wouldn't want anybody to have to go through it again. Like I say, it was far worse in the West than it was here in the Midwest. But looking back on it, all those hardships made families and people come closer together and appreciate what you did have. It had its good features, too, you know. Some good came out of it.

*Did you feel close to your family even though you were so far away from them?*

Oh, yes. Well, we've always been a close family. My family has, yes—always. Well, Adeline's, too. She's the same way.

*Adeline is your wife. Did you get a chance to go back and visit your family at all during that time?*

No. I didn't have money. When I went to work in Reno, I had a wonderful boss, Harry Homeshaw. The company was Nevada Auto Supply, and we were in selling parts and equipment and supplies to the automotive field: garages, service station, contractors, whatever. He was a wonderful man. That first year I was with him, along about Christmas he said, "You know, would you like to go home and visit your folks for Christmas?"

I said, "Oh, I sure would."

"Oh, don't you worry about money. I'll go ahead and talk to Ann. She'll write out a check for you, and you can pay her back as you can manage. Don't worry about it."

He gave me a check, and I went and bought a bus ticket; I got to go home and visit my folks.

*That was the first time in about three years, right?*

Yes, that was the first time in over two years, yes.

*What happened then? You went back to visit, but did you just come back here and stay?*

Oh, yes, I wanted to stay here. The only reason I took the job... basically, one of the reasons—my father had worked his heart out twelve or sixteen hours a day all his life, and he'd had nothing. I figured, "If I just take a regular job..." I'd have rather been a farmer. I would have loved to have been a farmer all my life. "If I take a regular job, I can work eight hours a day and forget it, come home, and I got my paycheck. I don't have... so the heck with that farming."

*Because farming is twenty-four hours a day, yes.*

Yes, it sure is, and it was tough then—still just coming out of the Depression. It's still tough today.

*Sure.*

In fact, it's so tough today that young people can't become farmers. They can't get enough money.

*Yes, to buy the land.*

You got to be big or nothing.

*Yes. It's changed quite a bit.*

It's a shame, because I love the farm life. Yes, I'd love to have been a farmer.

*So when you took that job, had you already decided to stay in Reno, or stay in Nevada?*

No, I hadn't even looked. When I got the job, I said, "Well, this is it. I'll just stay right here. I like the country, you know."

*When you went home, you knew you were going to come back and stay?*

Oh, yes. There was no question about that.

*How did your family feel about that?*

Well, that was all right. They were pleased with it. I turned out all right, so they were happy.

*Were they doing better back home by then, too?*

Oh, yes. By that time... let's see. No, 1938....

*Nineteen thirty-eight or thirty-nine?*

Oh, yes! By that time, both of my older sisters had graduated, and the only two at home were my younger sister and brother. My two older sisters went to school. Back there in those days, you'd go to school for two years and get a teaching degree at what they called a normal school. They both became teachers, so the only two left at home was my younger sister and brother. It was a lot easier for Dad then, yes. Then things were beginning to pick up again, so he was making a decent living. He never owned any land, but he was still was getting by.

*So that CCC camp came along right at a crucial time for you and your family.*

Oh, yes, and thousands more just in our same situation. You bet.



*Is that kind of what you found when you went into the camp: everybody was in the same situation?*

Oh, yes. Most everybody was in the same boat that I was. You know, the farm boys. The kids in the city, some of them weren't quite as bad off, but still, it was tough times for everybody.

*I wanted to go back and just ask you... you said when you got out here from Bemidji that a lot of the boys were sick with colds and everything.*

Well, boy, I guess. We go to work out on the canals, you know, and here—sunshiny weather and the temperature is up in the, oh, fifties, I guess, you know. So we're stripped down, bare to the waist working out there. I guess you know we all caught colds in a hurry.

Yes.

It was still winter. [laughter] It was such a change from forty below to that, you know. Boy, oh, boy.

*You said there was a doctor there at your camp?*

We had a full-time camp.... Yes, he was part of the company.

*Was there a sick bay, or what have you?*

He had a regular sick bay, and one of the barracks was set up.... It might have been where the recreation room barracks was. Part of that might have been. I don't remember. I think it was, now that I think about it. Yes, he had his own office and a bed or two and whatever. He could take care of kids. Besides, we never had any serious sicknesses while we

were there. However, we did have one boy get killed.

*I was going to ask you about that.*

Yes, we had one fatality. He was working out on a canal, and among our equipment we had what they called Cletracs. It's a little tractor about the size of a D4 Cat, or maybe a little smaller.

Anyway, what they were doing, these big willows and stuff they'd cut out of the canal; some of them had pretty good roots and trunk on them. They'd hook this little tractor-crawler on them with a chain, and they were pulling them out, so they'd get all that cleaned out of there. They had it hooked up to one and were pulling. Somehow at an angle up the bank, the chain broke, and it flipped the Cletrac. It landed square on him. From here down he was crushed.

*The machine, or the tractor....*

Landed right on him. Caught him from this, clear.... They got him into town and took him to the Fallon hospital there. He lived about six hours, and then he died. He didn't have a chance, because everything was smashed. He's the only fatality that we had and the only one that was ever really sick, very sick.

*Yes. Did you have any particular safety training that you recall?*

No.

*Just more or less on the job?*

That's the reason they relied on those experienced men that were bossing out in

the field—to look out for our safety, because they knew what they were doing. It's just one of those freak things that, one in a million times that chain would've broke at that pull.

*Yes. Were you there when that happened, or were you already an orderly?*

I was already in camp then. Of course, that just about shut the camp down for a day or so, losing one of the boys, you know. The mortuary took care of him there, but his body was shipped back home to Missouri, to bury him.

*Yes. It's a hard thing for youngsters when you haven't been around death.*

Well, that's the first time, yes.

*First time you'd been around a death?*

Yes, the first time. It was pretty hard to handle.

Oh, we had a lot of experiences. One experience we had the first year we were there.... Fortunately, I was an orderly by then. They had a terrible fire up by Lake Tahoe, in the Tahoe City area—somewhere in that area. It was out of control, and they couldn't get enough forest service people in there fighting it, so they called into the various CC camps for volunteers. Of course, they called for ours, and there was a whole bunch of guys, "Oh, that's neat," you know?

Twenty or thirty or more volunteered, so they loaded them in a truck and put them up there on the fire line. After about four or five days of fighting that, they finally got them home. You wouldn't catch any of them volunteering again. That was a terrible ordeal they went through there, fighting that, and

they knew nothing about it, either, so when they asked for volunteers, I ran like heck the other direction. I had a sneaking idea what it was going to be like.

I had the same thing happen to me in World War II when I was in the service. I was stationed at Stockton, and we were lined up for chow one evening. We had a terrible fire in Yosemite. They came back and said, "Stop everything, call for volunteers."

First, they're going to draft our whole company, and then a bunch of guys asked, "Can I trade with you?"

They gave up and said, "Well, heck."

They wanted 200 volunteers. There again, I run like a son of a gun the other direction. When those kids came back after fighting that, they were a sad bunch. Two of them had broken legs and a broken arm. They went through hell, and in those three or four days, all they had to eat was about two cans of beans. It was a terrible fight there. I guess none of them ever volunteered for another fire, either.

*Because it was long days of hard work and no food and dangerous.*

There was no place to even lie on the ground to get a little rest. They didn't have nothing.

*Any other experiences like that while you were out at Fallon that you recall?*

No, that's about it, I think.

*Anything out of the ordinary? Most weeks were just ordinary, right? You just went to work and....*

No, just go to work.

*Well, after you got the job, were you out before your two years were up, or right about the same time?*

No, I was out before my time was up.

*Did you keep track of what was going on out at the camp at all after that?*

No, not much, because I didn't have any transportation or any means of getting there and back. Of course, Peggy—I saw Peggy pretty regular for quite awhile, but she wasn't in contact with the camp after I left, either, so I never did know much about what went on after that.

I had one thing later on, one of the fellows... I think I had another fellow that was pretty friendly. I forgot about Newt Loomis. He married a local Fallon girl when he got out, and he was quite an athlete. He was on the baseball team and was on our basketball team. After he got out, he and his wife moved to Reno and took up golf. When they established a golf course out here at Stead—years ago, it was just a little nine-hole course—they hired Newt as a pro. He taught out there for several years until they got money and made an eighteen-holer. Then they hired a professional. He lost his job there, but I used to see Newt quite often here in Reno, during those.... That's several years ago now.

*Was it your impression that very many of the boys stayed in this area once they came to the camps, or did most of them head back home?*

Oh, a good part of them went home. I don't know, actually, out of ours. I know in the year or two I was connected with it, I know of about at least six fellows that stayed in Nevada and married locally.

Here's a very strange thing—our spike camp in Yerington had a fellow there (at that time I didn't know it), but he was the brother of the fellow that married Adeline's sister, her next sister. He was attached, working at the camp out there, too.

*So you became distant relatives.*

Yes. He didn't stay here, but his brother stayed here and married Adeline's sister. I know at least three or four in Fallon that stayed. Now, Russell Adams, of course, he stayed. I think he married a Reno girl. The other guys married Fallon girls.

*They just stayed right there in Fallon.*

Yes. One of them was quite a ball player, a pitcher, and he pitched for the Fallon local team for several years. He got into mining, dabbled around in prospecting, and had a little claim of his own he was working. Another guy married a local girl there, and they started a general merchandise store, a grocery mostly. They're out at this edge of Fallon. They ran that store for years.

Another one, he was one of our leaders over the barracks, Hoss Kelso. He got out and became a bartender in Fallon. He was a bartender there for years—an old bachelor. He met a woman in later years and fell in love and got married. She had about seven or eight kids. He had a ready-made family. Here's an old bachelor. Hoss stayed there until he died. He was well respected in Fallon. Everybody knew Hoss Kelso.

*Who was the fellow and his wife who had the grocery store there?*

Larry Goon.

*So just a few that stayed around that you know of.*

Just a few of them stayed, yes.

*Well, it sure seems to me like getting into that CCC camp not only helped you and your family out, but made a big difference in your life. You're still here.*

Oh, yes.

*Still a Nevadan. [laughter]*

Something [here] agreed [with me.]  
[laughter]

*Yes, right. Do you remember it as a fun time? Did you feel like you had a good time there, or was it mostly work?*

No, I enjoyed myself a lot there because, like I say, I've always been active in sports, so I had a lot of time to spend playing basketball and softball.

We had some experiences playing basketball. That was a ball. They hauled us around Fernley and Fallon. We got to see other towns. One time we played the Fernley town team. All those towns had town teams, baseball and everything, and pretty good teams. They scheduled a game for us in Fernley with the Virginia City town team. What a game that was. The star players in that... Lawlor Event Center, Jake Lawlor?

*Jake Lawlor?*

That's where Jake was from. And Gil Martin. In their younger days, they were hellions; boy, they were wild and wooly. They almost killed us in that. They were all bigger than we were and came over there about

half-gassed. They just *murdered* us. What a rough game that was, because we weren't even compared in size to them.

*When you say half-gassed, had they been drinking?*

Oh, yes. Jake and all that group there liked their booze pretty good in their early days. They were all good athletes, but boy, they were wild. Wowee. I'll never forget that.

*Was a rough game, was it? Or just stiff competition?*

No, it was a rough game, physically, yes.

*It was rough? Elbows, physical?*

The refereeing wasn't very strict in those games, so anything went, you know. Oh, they had slaughtered us.

We had another game—same thing. We played the Stewart Indian School. That's long gone now, too. In fact, there's an article in the paper the other day about a reunion they were having over there. And there again—no, it wasn't drunk or anything like that—but those Indians had a good ball club. It had a little old, small gymnasium; the line where you're out of bounds was only about, at the most, two feet from where the seats were, the lower seats all the way around. Those squaws, some of the younger gals, would try to trip you as you were going by. Anything went, you know. They slaughtered us, too. [laughter] We didn't play them again, but it was still fun. It's something you remember, for sure.

*Quite different from ball games today, right? [laughter] Yes, it sounds pretty lively.*

Yes. But we had a lot of fun. In the later years, when I was a salesman traveling on the road, Fallon was one of my stops. I had a jillion friends over there that I met in my work. There was nothing to do in the evening, and I went out to the softball game. I was sitting out there in the stands one day, and they got a big, tough game coming up—two of the top teams—and the winner of this game will be, probably, champion of the league. Well, the umpire didn't show up.

One of them yelled, "Hey, Ralph!"

I'm sitting on the stands. They knew I knew softball.

"Come on down."

I said, "Well, OK, I'll referee." Well, I almost got slaughtered there, too.

They had a play come out. You're probably not familiar with the rules and regulations of baseball and softball, but in a game, if you have a man on first and a man on second, and the batter hits what they call an infield fly—that's a fly ball that any man on the infield can catch—he's automatically out. Period. Well, they did that, and I called the guy out. Oh, man, that dugout came up. There came the manager. They were going to whip me: "Yet, that isn't right."

Well, somebody on the other side, they had a rule book. "Yes, that's right."

So the next day the manager ran me down and said, "Ralph, I want to apologize—you're right." [laughter]

But for awhile, it looked like we were going to have a free-for-all. I said, "I ain't going to referee anymore down here." [laughter]

*I think that's all the questions that I have, but if you have any other memories of things that were really great times or hard times or, you know, interesting things, I'd love to hear them. It just sounds like it was such an important thing for you.*

Yes, it was....

*A lot of your memories are from the athletics, from the ball games, right?*

Yes.

*That was fun to get out and go to the other towns.*

Oh, yes. Well, we used to.... Of course, dancing—I didn't know what dancing was. There wasn't such a thing back home, especially with a bunch of good Baptists, you know. [laughter]

*They didn't have dancing.*

Oh, no. I never knew what a dance was, so.... They got organized and somebody in town, a group, started getting an orchestra together and having a dance out at the camp, right at the camp. We had a recreation room, and you could clean that out through the middle and get all the chairs and everything out of there. Then you could have a fair amount of people in there dancing, you know.

Well, this girl that I met at church, Gladys... she's going to teach me how to dance. Oh, boy. Well, that was a fun night. We just locked arms and went side by side—da, da, da, da, da, da, da, dun. I did that for ages before I finally learned how to.... But that's where I learned how to dance.

Then, another thing that happened I'll never forget.... I was only there about two weeks, and I wandered downtown on a Saturday afternoon. I didn't know what a bar was. There isn't such a thing.... Well, Iowa was a blue state: there wasn't such a thing in Iowa, so I walked into this bar and looked around. Pretty full, Saturday afternoon. Some fellow had been playing roulette and won a bundle



of money—around two thousand bucks.  
“Drinks on the house!”

Well, I didn’t know what he was talking about,  
so, “Come on, ...”

I went into the bar, and we stood at the  
bar. I didn’t know what to order, so he said,  
“Bartender, give me a boilermaker.”

Said, “Yes, that’s good. I’ll take one.”

Oh, boy. I didn’t know how to drink it.

*It started with a boilermaker....*

I’d watch this guy. I didn’t know how to drink  
it, so he took the shot and just tipped it up and  
tossed it down in one gulp, you know, and I  
thought, “Well, OK.” Oh, man, I couldn’t get  
my breath; I couldn’t breathe. I thought I was  
going to die. Holy Toledo, they drink that  
stuff. [laughter] I never had another taste of  
alcohol the rest of the time I was in Fallon.  
That was it. Forget that.

*That cured you, right? [laughter]*

Oh, boy.

*But the dancing was OK? [laughter]*

Oh, yes, the dancing was fun. One of the  
greatest things Reno had in the early days  
was Tony’s El Patio Ballroom. That’s long  
gone. That was the greatest thing in the world.  
Every Saturday night Tony had a real good  
orchestra, and then during the year they’d  
bring in a lot of big-name orchestras. We  
danced to Guy Lombardo and Glenn Miller.  
You name it, and they were all there at one  
time or other. You could go to the dance  
on Saturday night; it cost you a dollar. You  
couldn’t miss a dance at Tony’s on Saturday  
night. We always went until we had a family  
where we were tied down. That was really  
fun. They had the same thing in Fallon. They

had a little dance hall there, above what was a  
theater then, or next to it. Occasionally, after  
I finally got the hang of doing a little of it, we  
went to a few there. Dancing was really fun.

*You said that they had an orchestra, too. Were  
they all townspeople that played instruments?*

Just a local pick-up group.

Yes, those were pretty good days. Like I  
said, when I went in the service, I went into  
the army air force, and we went through  
basic training and then into pre-flight. We,  
as future officers, were called “Mister.” They  
didn’t browbeat us like a lot of the regular  
enrollees. The main thing about it is, they ran  
you around there like a bunch of Boy Scouts  
that didn’t know enough to get out of the  
weather, you know. I’m glad I went through  
the whole thing once, but I sure wouldn’t want  
to go through it again.

*Were you up for being an officer, because of  
being in the CCC camp?*

No.

*No connection?*

No, no connection. I have three discharges  
from the army: the CCC’s, then later on I  
joined the Nevada National Guard. We didn’t  
have an air guard then, just a national guard.  
Then World War II came along, and I had  
a wife and one child, so they immediately  
kicked me out of the guard, because our  
guard was called in. Before we were in World  
War II, our guard was called in—active duty.  
Well, they gave us all—fellows with family—a  
discharge, so I had another discharge from  
the army. Then, when I finally enlisted and  
went into the air force and discharged, I got

another discharge from the army, because at that time there wasn't any air force; it was army air force. Now, it's a separate division, but then it was strictly army or navy.

*Did you feel like, though, having been in the CCC camp helped you with the army, just in terms of structure?*

Well, not really. Like I say, we weren't under the strict procedures in the CC's that we were with the army. You know enough, and you learn enough to take orders. You learned that in a hurry. [laughter] So it helped some maybe.

*Well, I don't have any more questions, but I really appreciate this information, especially on Camp Newlands. It's one that we're very interested in, and if you happen to think of anything else, you just let me know, OK?*

OK, I sure will.

*Thank you, Ralph.*

Be sure and get a hold of Russell Adams.

*I will.*

I'm hoping that's the right one, because he would have more information about the operation of the camp than I had, by far, because he was the company clerk. He was in the office and was the clerk.

*Great. Thank you, Ralph.*

You bet.



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HERMAN HAYNES

*Victoria Ford: Today is October 7, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford, and I will be conducting a telephone interview with Herman Haynes regarding CCC Projects in northern Nevada. Herman, the first thing I wanted to ask you was to tell me a little bit about your family at the time you entered the CCC program. Where were you living?*

Herman Haynes: At the time I was living here in St. Louis, and my mother worked for a florist. My father left many years ago, so my mother worked. My grandmother took care of my brother and me.

*It was just you two boys?*

Yes. I went into the three-C's because mother wasn't doing too well.

*What year was this?*

1940.

*We were still having some problems with Depression?*

Indirectly, yes. It was a Depression: things were pretty rough around the St. Louis area here.

*Were a lot of people short on money?*

Yes. Several of my friends that I bummed with joined the three-C's. At the time, they were pretty close to home,—across the river here in Illinois or in Missouri here—close to St. Louis, and they got to come home quite often. I thought, “Well, I'll join the three-C's and maybe things will work out.” Lo and behold, where did they send me? Out to Wells, Nevada.

*Your friends were stationed close to home?*

That's right. They were in Missouri and just across the river in Illinois.

*Were you a little surprised, then, to be shipped away?*

Oh, I was, definitely. At the time I thought, "Well, maybe I'll be in one of the camps with my friends." Things didn't work out that way, though, so it was quite a trip.

*Tell me a little bit about when you went in. Do you remember the induction process?*

It was down here at the court building in St. Louis. I went down there, signed up, and took the oath, and I think someone gave me a couple of streetcar bus tokens at the time so that I could come back home.

After we were sworn in, we were sent down to the Jefferson Barracks. That was the army post at that time—very active. We were getting close to the war time, World War II. Evidently, they must have known something, but there were an awful lot of soldiers down there at the time. I guess there were approximately thirty of us from the St. Louis area here. At the time, they had built a new barracks down there, and we were lucky enough to stay in those for about two days until we got situated. Then we were shipped out.

*When did you first learn that you were going to be shipped out?*

I guess it was when we were down at the Jefferson Barracks at the army post. We were there about two days, and then one morning a train backed in down there. We loaded on to this train, and we began our trip to Wells, Nevada.

*Did you know where you were going right from the beginning?*

Actually, we didn't. They didn't tell us where we were going until we got there. [laughter] That was about two days later.

*You couldn't tell your mother where you were going to be?*

Not at the time. As far as phone service was concerned, we didn't have a telephone, and I didn't know that much about it until we got to Wells, Nevada.

*Were you on the train for about two days?*

That's correct. From here we went through Salt Lake City. We went across the salt flats. And, of course, Wells, Nevada is just west of the salt flats out there, west of Utah. It was about the middle of January, 1940—very cold. After two days, we stopped at Wells, Nevada: it was in the morning about 6:30, 7 o'clock—winter time, *very* cold. There were trucks waiting to transport us to the camp, down into Ruby Valley, which was approximately eighty-one miles from Wells over an old gravel road, and it was quite a bumpy ride. [laughter] It was really quite an experience, leaving home and then going into this. To me it was a primitive area.

*Were you a little concerned about all of that?*

Yes. Other than making friends with some of the members before we left, and also on the train, we talked to our friends there and kind of forget about how bad things really are.

*When you got to the camp at Ruby Valley, what was there?*

The camp had already been established. There were three-C members at the camp,



and they had been working. Evidently, it was time for some of them to go home, because you only signed up for six months at a time. At that time, some of the members that were at the camp were leaving, so we kind of filled in there.

*The barracks and everything were there when you arrived?*

That's correct. The barracks and everything were there. It was all set up.

*How many buildings would you say were there?*

That's really hard to say. As far as the barracks are concerned, there must have been almost 200 men in the camp. These men were practically from all over the country, but some of them were from Arkansas, Missouri, and different parts of the country that were stationed there at the time.

*Did you have any guys from Nevada there?*

Not that I know of. We probably didn't ask where each individual was from at the time. We just made friends, and that was about it.

*What happened during your first days at camp? Tell me a little bit about the living conditions and so on.*

Well, the living conditions were great. We had a PX there. We had an infirmary for people with injuries or otherwise, and the first few days there were kind of busy. After we were actually there about two days and got acquainted, we went to work, so we went out in the morning. The trucks went out—dump trucks—and there was a gravel pit about three-quarters of a mile from camp. They gave

us picks and shovels, and we went out there and picked at the gravel and then loaded the trucks. The trucks were used to upgrade the roads around the Ruby Lake area, and also towards Wells, Nevada.

*Was that the main project for the whole Ruby Valley Camp?*

No, that was just kind of a maintenance thing. The real project was a Fish and Wildlife Service. We had a big drag line out there. At the time they were cleaning around the edge of the lake and enlarging the lake itself.

*They were cleaning up the lake, and maintaining the roads was just part of that project?*

Yes.

*What else did they do?*

They had a bulldozer there. They had a road grader. I wasn't into the machinery at the time. I guess that's about it for about the first couple of months.

*For the first two months you were on a crew that was mostly working on the roads?*

We worked on roads and maintenance and things like that around the area.

*What happened after that?*

After that the weather started warming up, and we were going into spring. The weather was getting nice, and we were going into spring, and some of the members that had been there for quite awhile were leaving. Their time was up, and they didn't sign up again, so they were leaving. That left some openings

for people like me and the other members to take over maintenance and things like that, supplying the water and the electricity.

I was lucky enough at the time, because the fellow that drove what we called the army truck also ran the PX. They needed someone to do that, and the commanding officer—First Lieutenant Robert E. Meek, he was the one who was running the camp—chose me to take a driver's test for the army truck. I did that, and he went along. It was kind of odd. We drove along the road on the lake there. It was kind of eerie at first, but then I got used to it. I talked to some of the other drivers. They said that he would try to distract you—make you

look someplace when you weren't supposed to instead of keeping your eyes on the road. I knew all about these things that were going to happen. When I finished the test, I had passed the test and got a card stating that I was the driver of the truck.

At the time there was a captain—I can't think of his name now—that took care of supplies and also the PX. I was more or less working for the captain after that, so I got the job of driving the army truck to go into town to get supplies and also to run the PX.

*You had double duty. You were driving the truck and operating the PX.*



Haynes learned to drive a truck and frequently traveled to Wells and Salt Lake City for supplies. He also took enrollees into Ely for recreation trips.

(Courtesy of Joan Sharpe, CCC Legacy)

That's correct.

*Did your training for driving the truck amount to that test? [laughter]*

Indirectly. I drove vehicles here before I went into the three-C's and knew a little bit about it, but just after talking to some of the members there about what was going to happen during the test, it kind of helped me out.

*At any time that you were there, did you have any training at all, or did you just learn on the job?*

As far as training is concerned, we had schooling here. They had a regular school for some of the people who couldn't read too well; they weren't too good in school, so they had training for that. We had a teacher there for that. We had different training classes as far as fire suppression, in case a forest fire or anything would break out. We had training for how to take care of that, and we had other different little classes that I really can't remember. My certificates are down at Jefferson Barracks there, at the three-C museum.

*You do remember going to classes. Were there any fires while you were there?*

There was, and we were supposed to get called out, but evidently, someone else or some other group took care of it so we didn't have to go.

*I wanted to just go back to the people that ran the camp, the first lieutenant and the captain. Was this army then?*

Yes.

*They were active in the army? They weren't retired?*

I think they were active in the army.

*Tell me a little bit about the food that you had there.*

The food was excellent. After leaving home, things were pretty rough here in the St. Louis area. I got into camp there, and the food was great so I really enjoyed it and looked forward to every meal.

*Because things had been a bit touch-and-go at home, had they?*

Yes.

*I think it was for a lot of people, yes?*

True. They call that the Depression Era.

*How old were you when you went in?*

I guess I was about eighteen.

*You were out of high school?*

Yes.

*Had you graduated?*

No. I graduated from grade school in 1937 and went to high school for about a half a year—didn't care much for that. Then I went to a vocational school here in the St. Louis area and learned to be a machinist, but at that time jobs were kind of sparse. As far as someone just out of school getting a job, it was pretty rough.

*But you had that training before you ever went into the CCC's, is that right?*

Yes, about three years of vocational school training.

*Did you feel like they used that training?*

Not really. Things seem like they happened so fast, and it was hard to keep up.

*What did you do there for fun?*

We had a ball field there and played softball with the Indians.

*Was there a reservation area nearby?*

Yes, there was a reservation nearby. Other than that, we hiked around different areas around the camp, up the mountain and around the lake. I guess that's about it.

*Did you work seven days a week?*

No, we didn't work seven days a week.

*You had your weekends off?*

Right.

*Did you get to go into town ever?*

Yes. I was driving the army truck and used to get to town quite often, because we'd go to Wells, Nevada. The captain and I would go to Wells, Nevada, to get supplies, and then also we would go to Elko. With Elko, we went down the road a little bit toward Wells, Nevada, and then we went up over the pass—up to about 11,000 feet. We went up an old road that went up over the top of the mountains there and down and around, and it came out in Elko, Nevada.

*I bet that was a thrilling ride.*

Yes, it was. We went in there quite often to get supplies, and we also took some of the men in there for recreational trips.

*That was what I was wondering, if you got to go in for recreation?*

Yes.

*What kinds of stuff did you get to do when you were in town for fun?*

Being the driver, I couldn't do much, but I guess most of the fellows went in there and had a few drinks and gambled with what they had—they only made a couple bucks a month. They got five dollars a month at that time. I couldn't do much of anything because I was being the designated driver.

*You had to stay sober, yes?*

Yes.

*When you went to town, what would you say the reception was of the town's folks to the CCC boys?*

Back then, sixty years ago, the people were a lot different than they are now. We were all accepted.

*They really welcomed you then, yes?*

More or less, yes. We didn't have much money to spend, but other than that, there wasn't anything against us.

*Did any of the boys that you knew stay around after their time at the camp?*

No, because about the middle of summer, end of the early fall, the camp broke up.

*It completely dissolved?*

They moved us. First, though, I want to go back to give a little information on the trips to Wells, Nevada, with the captain. At the time they had governors on those trucks, and they would only go about thirty, thirty-five miles an hour. I wanted to get there faster so, being slightly mechanically inclined, I disconnected the governor on there. One day we were going into Wells, Nevada, -- it's about eighty-one miles. It was a long trip at thirty miles an hour. We were going along so I put the old pedal to the metal, and we were up to about sixty miles an hour. That really surprised the captain, because he said, "What did you do?"

I said, "Well, I think it would be better if we get there quicker because it's a long trip." [laughter] After that, he didn't say anything.

[laughter] *It kind of agreed with him, too, then, yes?*

Right.

*Was it all on gravel roads?*

Yes. They had culverts at that time. You'd be driving along, and there would be a big dip in the road where the water would go through. Of course, they were all dry at the time, but you'd go along, and there were a lot of those. It was quite a trip from the camp into Wells, Nevada.

*Did you pass very many ranches or anything on the way in?*

No, there were no ranches at all down there.

*There wasn't anything going on the way in.*

Near the camp up there, there was a store—like a general store. I think it was run by the Indians. Sometimes they had drinks and things like that, and I'd take some of the members up there in the evening at times for recreation.

*Yes, I didn't realize there was anything out there for you to go to.*

There was a small ranch, just close to the camp there, down along the lake. It had a few cattle and a horse or two, but that's about the size of it.

*Did you ever get to know any of the people on the ranch?*

Actually, I didn't. It just seems like I was so busy. I just didn't get that acquainted.

*Tell me a little bit about the camp dissolving. Did that come as a surprise to you?*

It sure did. It was in the beginning of fall, and I don't know what happened. We were out of the offices of the government, and I think maybe that as far as the project that we were working on, it was pretty well along, or was almost finished. Maybe that's why we got transferred to another camp.

*So the expansion of the lake was pretty well finished?*

Yes.

*Was there any restocking of fish or anything like that going on at the same time?*

No. We were just enlarging and cleaning around the shoreline of the lake.

*Were you improving the roads in and out?*





Herman Haynes worked on the new telephone line from the Ruby Lake Wildlife Refuge to Wells, Nevada. The men are shown digging holes for the telephone poles, ca. 1940.  
(Courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Yes.

*That was pretty well done by the time the camp dissolved?*

Yes. There was one other project we did, too. We started to put in a phone line from the camp; it was from the Indian reservation to Wells, Nevada. We started to put in a phone line there and dug the holes and put in these telephone poles. Of course, that project wasn't finished, either, by the time we left there.

*So both projects were incomplete when you left?*

I think the Fish and Wildlife lake project was OK, but the phone line was incomplete. The roads were improved, though.

*That's interesting about the phone. That's the first time that I've heard of that as one of the projects of one of the camps.*

That's what we did. We went out and dug the holes in the rock out there and set the poles. I guess the project was finished by somebody else, but it wasn't finished when we left.

One of the other interesting things we did, too, was on Fourth of July. [laughter] The company commander called me, and he wanted me to take a group of guys on a rec trip down around Ely, Nevada. It's near Ruth, which is the largest copper mine in the world. That's just close to Ely. We went down there for a two-day jaunt on a rec trip. It was Fourth of July. We got to town there, and it was kind



of hot. Everybody had a couple of bucks to spend, and they were all happy.

Anyway, a funny thing happened. One of the members got a little drunk, and he started flirting with the sheriff's wife. [laughter] I think we had to get him out of jail the next day when we left. [laughter]

*That probably wasn't real smart. [laughter]*

There were all kinds in these camps, and I still think of that and laugh today.

*It was a good time then?*

Yes. Some of the other trips I made, too, with the captain, took us into Salt Lake City to do some official business. We drove from camp to Wells, and then took the main highway across the salt flats into Salt Lake City and went up to Ft. Douglas, Utah. It was an army camp right in the middle of town up there. We were there over night, and we got a few more supplies and came back to camp. That was quite a trip, because I had never been there before.

*On the train on the way out you just passed through, yes?*

Right.

*Did you have time to look around at Salt Lake then?*

No. I was up there at the fort, and was just on business and supplies, so that's about all we did. You know the irony of the whole part was that when World War II broke out, the three-C camps broke up.

When the camp broke up in Nevada, they sent us to Heber City, Utah. That's south of

Salt Lake. You have to go through Salt Lake City, past Park City, Utah—where they had the Olympics—and down into Heber City. They transferred all of us that wanted to go, and we were down there with the Bureau of Reclamation. It was run by the army. We had army officers down there, only a different group. In fact, we were just on the outskirts of town, which was great. We had a theater, a shopping center. That thing was almost like being at home.

*That was quite a bit of a difference from being eighty-one miles from anywhere, yes?*

That's true. Being with the Bureau of Reclamation, they were clearing land down there. I don't know whether that was the Provo River, but we were clearing land. They put in a large dam down there between two mountains. They picked the army engineers to put the dam in, but we cleared all the trees and brush and everything out of the area down there, so that when the water filled up, there wouldn't be too many problems. I was there until World War II broke out.

Another interesting thing is that we were camped, and every morning you could get up and look up at the Indian goddess. Mt. Timpanogas -- that's the Indian princess. She's what the mountain looked like at a certain position. When you looked up there, that was the mountain. That was more or less way back from camp from us.

*So you spent about six months or nine months at Ruby Valley?*

Right.

*Then you went to Utah. About how long were you in Utah?*

Altogether I was in the three-C's for two years, so I was in Utah for about maybe a year and a couple of months—two or three months.

*Did you have a choice about signing up and doing more than six months?*

No. Not more than six months. They'd come around every six months and ask you if you wanted to stay or sign up. First I started out as just a laborer there. Then I got a job as truck driver. I got my permit to drive a regular truck—a crew truck was what it was—to take the men out to the job and then bring them back. I had to take the lunches for the men, but after that, I got another job running this tractor. The tractor operators at that time were called cat skimmers. The name of the tractor equipment was Caterpillar. We called them cat skimmers. I worked on that until World War II came along, and then they shut the camp down. Then I came back to St. Louis here. They paid my way back to St. Louis, and that was an interesting trip, too. [laughter] They gave me money to travel from Heber City up to Salt Lake City, and they also gave me a train ticket back to St. Louis. I got on a train there in Salt Lake City. I went to Colorado Springs, went up over the Continental Divide, and then from there went across Kansas, into Kansas City, and then from Kansas City to St. Louis.

I stayed around St. Louis for a little bit. It was just something I missed. I don't know whether it was the mountains or what, but I missed something. At that time, they were looking for workers out there to work on these government projects. I decided to get back on a bus, and I went from St. Louis to Heber City again. The Bureau of Reclamation was still doing some work around the Heber City area there, on the irrigation canals. This was

right after the war started, and I was under civil service, so I went to work for them for a few months, and then got tired of that. I thought "Well, I can make more money if I go on these government projects," so I got on a bus and went up to Tooele, Utah. That's where they were building the ammunition dumps, and that's where all that poison gas is stored right now. I worked up there at Tooele, Utah, as a heavy equipment operator, and after a few months I got my draft notice from St. Louis.

I wrote them a letter and I said, "I can't be back there in a week." I said, "Will you transfer my draft notice to Heber City, Utah?"

They did that, and that's where I got my draft notice. I didn't stay around the town long, and that's when they gave me bus fare to go up to Salt Lake City to Ft. Douglas, where I was inducted there. I went into the army engineers.

*I want to ask you a couple more questions about your time in the CCC. It sounded like when you left home, you might have been a little bit homesick?*

I was. In Nevada, anyway, right after two and half or three months—I got homesick. I'll tell you, it was sad, but I came through it OK. I got over it after about a few days, by getting busy again.

*Were you able to stay in touch with your mom? Was it mostly letters?*

Yes, letters.

*It sounds like you kind of outgrew that because you got to enjoying what you were doing.*

I did, definitely, because I wouldn't have gone back out there to work until I was drafted.

*What do you think was the importance of the CCC time in your life?*

I guess the first thing is that they took people, like myself, and those who weren't making much or eating much, and put them into work. They gave us something to do and paid us a few dollars a month. I don't know of any three-C's that didn't enjoy the work that they were doing, to tell you the truth, because there were people there from all backgrounds and all different parts of the country. Right near the end of the Depression, the people probably enjoyed what they were doing.

*You had shelter and food as well as a little bit of money.*

Yes, and medical and dental care.

*Is there anything else that you feel like was important about that?*

I could reminisce a little bit on a rec trip to Elko, Nevada. I had a bad tooth, and I had to have it pulled. The dentist didn't come to camp, so on a rec trip, I went in there to find a dentist. He was up over a saloon, and I had a tooth pulled. It cost me two bucks. That was a lot of money, but I had to have something done at the time because it was kind of miserable.

*Normally you would have had dental care at your camp, though?*

Yes, a dentist did come around there every so often, but at the time, he had been there and left. Of course, I had problems after he left.

*I'm running out of questions on my list here, but I'm real interested because you stayed in*

*for two years, and you're one of the first people that I've been able to talk to who did that. It just seems like it must have been an important time in your life, to have been doing that when you were a young man.*

Yes, it sure was. I can't say it's one of the best things that happened to me, but after while I enjoyed it, and if I had to do it over, I probably would. [laughter] As far as the three-C's today, they would never make it. There's too many different types of people that just couldn't probably put up with what we did.

*What things wouldn't they be able to put up with?*

Being out there and being controlled by somebody. There are a lot of people now—criminals, dope-heads, things like that—and it would be hard to really control these people.

*But young men were willing to do this at that time, right?*

That's right. We didn't know what drugs and things were at the time, and we didn't know a lot of other problems, so everything seemed to work out OK.

*There was some respect for people who were in charge.*

That's true. It was a different time and a different place.

*That's an interesting thought that the CCC camps wouldn't make it today, like they did back then.*

They talk about reinstating them, but I don't think they would. They would have to do something different as far as controlling the

men or the people; in fact, today they would probably even take women.

*There were no women in the camps?*

Oh, no.

*Were there any Native Americans in the camps?*

No, but there were people from different parts of the country. We had a couple of members in Utah. They were from Mexico. Other than that, it was all men.

*Yes. In your camp, it sounds like they were mostly from the Midwest.*

No, it was a mixture. We had people from Arkansas and other parts, too.

*So the South, also.*

Yes, Oklahoma. We used to call them "Okies" and "Arkies."

*You got to meet quite a variety of people then?*

Not only that, but it was very educational as far as meeting these different people, and talking to them, and getting to know them.

*Learning about differences?*

True.

*Are there other things you'd like to record that maybe I haven't asked? Are there any special memories or thoughts that you might have about it?*

I think we pretty well covered Nevada. Utah. Well, we had one time we were off a few days, and me and a friend decided we were

going down to Provo, Utah. We got out on the highway and hitchhiked down to Provo, and we got a job with a farmer for a day down there picking pears. [laughter] That was kind of strenuous, but we made it and made a couple of bucks down there, so we had some spending money.

*Took your time off to work for a little bit more cash?*

Yes. We could have been getting eight dollars. It used to be thirty dollars a month, so you could keep five, and twenty-five went home. Later on it was thirty dollars a month. We got eight bucks, and twenty-two went home. We got to keep a little more money for different things that we needed, like shaving cream, toothpaste, cigarettes, and whatever.

*None of those things were provided?*

No, we had to buy those ourselves.

*Just food and board?*

Food, board, medicine, and also some education.

*Clothing?*

Yes, clothing. We wore army clothing.

*You had uniforms?*

Uniforms, right. It was the army color, but then later on they came up and changed our uniforms. About the last few months that I was in there, they changed our uniforms, and they were Park green.

That just about covers everything.

*OK. Thank you for your help.*

REX J. HINES

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*Victoria Ford: Today is August 28, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford. I'm talking to Rex Hines on the telephone. Rex lives in Panama City, Florida, and today we are going to be talking about the CCC Camp at Indian Springs, Nevada. First of all, Rex, tell me about your family. Where did you live at the time you entered the CCC Program?*

Rex J. Hines: I was between homes, so to speak. I was living mostly in an old Dodge car body.

*Where were your parents?*

Well, my mother was there, but my daddy died when I was three years old.

*The Depression would have been on. What did you and your mom do for money?*

My mother worked for a doctor, and she made six dollars a week. It was a dollar a day for six days. It's what we lived on.

*What did she do for that work?*

She answered the phone and made appointments. He was one of these rubbing doctors. I think they call them osteopath.

*You were both living on six dollars a week, and you lived in an old Dodge car?*

Off and on. We lived in a house that had six families living in this one house. There were many kids running around. A lot of times I wouldn't even come home at night. I had this old car body fixed up where I could build a fire in it, and I preferred to go out there and sleep.

*What town were you living in?*

That was in Owensboro, Kentucky.

*I thought you had a southern accent. [laughter]*

*How did you hear about the CCC project?*



I don't really remember. I guess the word just got around among us boys.

*How old were you at that time?*

I was about fifteen. I was going to trade school in the morning and working at Gene & Jimmie's Garage in the afternoon. I didn't get a whole lot of my high school education. It was mechanical and hands-on work.

*Did you get paid at Gene & Jimmie's Garage?*

Yes, ma'am.

*So you had some income, too?*

Well, I didn't get much then. Later on, I went to work for them full-time, but the most I ever made there was seventeen dollars a week. Now that was working full-time.

*Were you making that much when you went into the CCC?*

No, I think that was after I came back from the CCC. It's hard for me to remember.

*Exact times, sure. Do you think you were fifteen when you went into the CCC?*

I know I was about fifteen, because I went in in 1935, and I was born in 1919.

*How did you get started in the CCC? Did they have a project right there in Owensboro?*

No, they sent you to Ft. Knox, Kentucky, to take your physical and your mental test. You stayed there three or four days, and then they put us on a train and shipped us to the state of Nevada or Utah. I can't remember exactly where we got off the train, because we got in a truck and went to Indian Springs Camp.

*That was located outside of which town in Nevada?*

Ely.



Hines and enrollee Ewing at Camp Indian Springs in the high desert between Eureka and Ely.  
(Courtesy of Rex Hines)





Rex Hines sits on top of a stock water tank being delivered to the range.  
(Courtesy of Rex Hines)

*It was outside of town, though, right?*

Oh, yes. About forty-five, fifty miles.

*Was it north of Ely?*

I would say between Ely, Salt Lake City, and Reno, Nevada.

*It would have been a little bit further north of Ely then?*

I'd have to look at a map to find out. I always thought it was southwest. That's where I was stationed, and they put us in the barracks where we went to sleep. That took care of that night.

*Then what did you have to do there?*

When I first went there, they put me to work as a mechanic. They had a civilian mechanic that did all the garage work. They got me a job helping him, but he and I didn't get along. They had a lot of truck driving to do, so they made me a truck driver, and I did that for most all the time I was there.

*You were there how long?*

For about a year and a half. They sent me to Salt Lake City, and I started hauling lumber from Salt Lake City down to Boulder Dam, when they were building Boulder Dam. Most of my time was spent

on the road between Reno and Salt Lake City, Utah.

*That was all part of the CCC work?*

Yes. I was working on the dam down there, but I didn't work on the dam any. I just hauled lumber.

*Did you make good money while you were on CCC camp?*

Our salary was five dollars per month. I got \$2.50 of that, and they sent my mother \$2.50, so my salary was five dollars a month. Of course, I got my board and my room and my food, you know.

*Now, most people say that they sent twenty-five dollars home.*

Well, they didn't do that when I was there. They may have later on, but it was five dollars a month. That's what we got.

*Did you feel like you got any training while you were in the camp?*

Well, no, not really. I was already a mechanic and a truck driver. I had to take care of myself in a fist fight. There were a lot of them.

*Did you have some conflicts there?*

Oh, yeah. I had a bunch of them. [laughter]

Well, I can remember the worst one. I was a truck driver, so I would haul the boys into Ely on Saturday night or Saturday afternoon, and was supposed to bring them back about midnight, back to Indian Springs Camp. This one particular night, they were all drunk, and

I couldn't get them to get in the truck to come home. It was cold.

Back in those days they had what they call leaders and assistant leaders. There was an assistant leader, and this guy in charge was a leader, so during the process of the argument, I crawled up in the truck to get on this guy, who called me a bad name. My leader grabbed me by the feet and dragged me out from under the truck, because they were fixing to kill me. He took us over to a little rooming house, and we spent the night in the bed asleep, and left all these other guys out there in the cold. Believe you-me, the next morning they were ready to get in that truck and go home. They spent a miserable night out there, because they were all broke. They didn't have any money.

*Do you remember any other cases like that?*

I remember a Mexican trying to kill me over a cowboy hat one time. We had all been in the town. It was Saturday afternoon, and a bunch of these CCC boys had caught this Mexican with this pretty, white cowboy hat, and beat him up and took his hat away from him. I didn't know anything about this, so I came walking down the street and met up with the one boy wearing this big, white hat. I wanted that thing, so I gave him fifty cents for it, not knowing the story behind all this, and I went into a big bar, which was about a hundred feet long. It had maybe a hundred stools and a huge mirror behind it, and I was sitting there admiring my white hat and drinking a beer. Then this Mexican came through the door with a big knife in his hand. I didn't notice him at first. I saw him when he came in, but I didn't pay any attention to him. The bartender hollered to me and said, "Look out!" he said. "He's going to get you!"

Well, I turned around, and he was lunging at me with that knife. I was a pretty agile guy in those days, so I dodged him and ran down to the end of the bar. He was right behind me with this knife, and I jumped up on the bar and started running back down the bar. The bartender had a ball bat or a club or something, so when the Mexican came by him, he just racked him in the knees with that bat and knocked him to the floor. When he did that, I turned around and jumped on him with my feet and got the knife away from him.

In the meantime, somebody had called the sheriff or whatever they had—they had a few around town – and they came out there and got it straightened out. Those were about two of the worst cases I had.

*What do you think the townspeople thought of the CCC boys?*

Well, I didn't converse with them too much. I didn't go to their churches or attend any of their meetings. I played with some of the kids shooting marbles on the street, but as far as talking to the townspeople, I don't recall that.

*Do you think that the CCC boys had a tough reputation?*

I know they did.

*How do you know that?*

Well, just from talking to them and being at camp and hearing what happened when they were in town... who they got into it with. I would hear what this man did, and what that man did, and all the unpleasant things that they could think of that happened, you know.

*So, you think that they kind of went to town and fought and then the townspeople thought they had that reputation of being fighters?*

I know they did, because so many of these guys were from up north. I forget what you call northerners now, but most of them were sort of hard to get along with. There weren't too many of us old southern boys in there that I remember.

*Were the southern boys easier to get along with?*

Yes.

*But it was these northern boys, like from New York and so on?*

They were mostly from Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan and Rhode Island. That place where that little guy ran for president. He got beat. I can't think of his name right now. Anyway, they were from all around the Great Lakes. That's where most of them come from, it seemed. There weren't many southern boys in there that I remember.

*It sounds like you met guys from all over?*

I met them there and when I was in the air force, too. I had a little radio, and I had to keep it locked up in a wooden box, because if you didn't keep things locked up, they'd steal them. At night I would open that box and turn the radio on, and we would listen to Guy Lombardo. He played beautiful band music off the coast of California, and it would come in so clear, because we were up in a high elevation. We'd lay there and listen to that pretty music until twelve o'clock, and then I'd turn it off, lock up the box, and go to sleep.

*Did that music make any of the guys homesick?*

I'm satisfied a bunch of them were, but I wasn't.

*You weren't homesick?*

No ma'am. I never got homesick a day in my life out there.

*Why is that?*

I lived better there than I did anywhere else in my life. I had something to eat, a place to sleep. If I had a toothache, I could go to the dentist. I had a job I loved. I liked the country, and I had no homesick problems. I did miss my girlfriend—that was the only thing.

*If you liked it so much, why did you leave in a year and a half? What happened to take you out of there?*

I don't know. When you're gone a year and a half, and you're seventeen years old, you have an urge to go back home for some reason. I wanted to see my girlfriend, and they paid us off in silver dollars. They didn't pay you in dollar bills. I had thirty silver dollars—fifteen dollars in each pocket—and I wanted to go home and see my girlfriend.

I have to tell you about going out there on the train. They fed us two meals a day, and that's not much for a growing boy to eat, you know. You had all the water you wanted to drink, but you only got two meals a day.

*That was on the train?*



Rex Hines joined the armed forces after leaving the CCC. This photo was taken in 1942 at Venice Air Base. Rex Hines is fourth from the left. (Courtesy of Rex Hines)



That was on the train going from Ft. Knox to Salt Lake City, Utah, or wherever we got off.

*Then when you got out there you had three meals a day?*

Yes, we had three meals a day out there, but on the train it was two meals a day.

*When you went back to Owensboro, did you stay there, then?*

I went back and took this thirty dollars I had, and I bought myself a truck. You could buy the cars out of the junk yard for fifteen or twenty dollars. Good ones. I bought this Dodge truck and put a new motor in it—or a used motor—and then I started hauling watermelons from Georgia to Chicago.

*So that truck hauling that you did in CCC kind of paid off when you got back home? You knew how to run a business on that.*

I knew how to drive a truck. That's all it took. [laughter] If you could go talk somebody into getting the loads, you had it made. I'd buy watermelons in Georgia for three cents a piece. That's three cents, now, for a watermelon. I'd take them to Chicago and sell them for a quarter. You made a little money anyway.

*When you look back on that time at CCC, what is your favorite memory of that?*

I don't really have a favorite memory.

*Was it a good time in your life?*

It was. For the kind of life I had been living, it was sort of like a millionaire. [laughter]

*The Depression must have been kind of hard around your town.*

It was rough. Owensboro was a poor town. It had a maybe one big business, and that was the Glenmore Distillery. It had the Kenred Tube and Lamp Corporation which made things for radios, to make a radio play. That was the biggest two industries in that town. The rest of it was farming and anything you could do. We had one of the two steel mills. We were right on the Ohio. We had a beautiful view of the river, and a nice park, and they built a new bridge across the river, which I helped build when I was a boy. There are only so many things that I could tell you about, but I know you don't have the time.

*Yes. I know.*





## HARRY NORMAN

*Victoria Ford: Today is October 3, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford, and I'm going to be conducting a phone interview with Harry Norman of Crystal River, Florida, about CCC Camps in northern Nevada. Harry, the first thing I want to ask you is to tell me a little bit about your family and where you lived at the time that you went into the CCC Program.*

Harry Norman: Specifically speaking, I was in a family that was middle class. My father was working when most people weren't working in the 1930s.

*What was he working at?*

He was a marine engineer.

*With the U.S. Marines?*

Not marine marines. General marine. He worked particularly in shipping. He was not with the army or the navy or anything that's associated with the army or navy.

*Where did you live?*

At that time I lived in Manhattan—upper Manhattan—which was a classy section, and we were quite content. He had a good job when people had no work, and they were out selling apples, so I had a nice home. We had a nice apartment. They weren't homes; there were apartments then. Everybody didn't own a home then, as they do now more or less. I was in Paris twice when I was about five years old and again when I was eleven, because my mother came from Paris. It was a nice lifestyle. I had good Christmases, good gifts, and all that good stuff.

*It sounds like you had the exception for the Depression years.*

Yes. Then the explosion came. They split. I had to go into a place which was a cold-water flat.

*Who did you stay with, your mom or your dad?*



Harry Norman returned to New York and got his teaching credentials.  
He is shown here in 1940, a year after leaving the CCC.  
(Courtesy of Harry F. Norman Jr.)

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My mom and then myself. He went his way: she went her way, but she was independent so we lived in a cold-water flat in the Lower West Side, in New York. It was not easy. We had ice to go in the ice box, and all that good stuff. We had a little stove to keep the kitchen warm.

Then she went to work for what was called The Drury School. It was a school for millionaire girls. She went in there as a tutor and to take care of the girls. I went to school on the East Side at the regular school. We went through that, and that came to an end when we moved to Staten Island. A lot happened in the interim. When we went there, she no longer worked for the school, and she met somebody else, who we lived

with. At that time, you had to be employed or on welfare, and she was on welfare. Then, either you stayed on welfare, or somebody who was old enough to work in the WPA, which was myself... I went into WPA and worked in there, and then I went into the CCC.

Basically, I went to the CCC, and I stayed there for six months—the best six months of my life. The only thing I'm sorry about is that I didn't stay in Fallon. I was an itchy person, though, and New York was the center of the universe for me, so I went back. While I was in the CCCs, I came in there on October. New York was very cold.

*What year was this?*

October of 1938, shortly before my birthday. I got into the camp, and these guys were sitting outside, with little funnels of water coming down out of a spigot. They were wearing nothing from the waist up, and they were washing in this cold water. We were freezing when we got off the train. I said, "This is a nut place! Where did I go?" [laughter] Shortly thereafter I was doing the same thing, but I enjoyed going out in the field and working by the dam. Again, I was looking for something that wasn't so difficult to do, so I wound up in a camp as a maintenance individual.

*How did you first hear about the WPA and the CCC camps?*

That was in the papers all the time. They promoted that when you went down to apply for the WPA. Once I applied I either went or stayed. I didn't have to go, but I decided to go to get away from home. My mother was a good person. She was not a very motherly-type person, which didn't bother me, because I got used to it, but I felt that I should get my wings spread. I was only seventeen then.

*You were seventeen when you went in?*

I was seventeen, but I went in 1938 because it was before my birthday. I was going from New Jersey -- that's where you embarked from, to go to your camp—on the eighteenth. Somewhere in there, between staying in Jersey and getting on the train, my birthday was spent on the train. I never thought of birthdays, though. It just happened. I just looked at the copy I have from my discharge, which is on record in Fallon.

*At the museum there, right?*

Yes.

*You went in from New Jersey. What was it like when you went in? Did you have to do a physical and everything like the military?*

Yes. The whole bit.

*Then did you go right away after that?*

I got in October 18th. It shows on the back of my papers that I was in transit from the 18th to the 21st. Ft. Dix, New Jersey. The type of work was conditioning, whatever that meant. The matter of performance was satisfactory. From 10/22 - 10/25, I was en route to Camp Carson River. That was the name put on the paper here. I think it is BT dash 35, Fallon, Nevada.

The type of work was travel, and our performance, satisfactory. We arrived at Camp Carson River, on 10/26. My birthday was 10/23, so I was on the train at that time.

*Do you remember much about the train ride?*

Yes. We were going on, and the windows were shut on the train. The soot from the engine came in through the windows and covered you with powder from the coal. Then we got off, and I saw these fellows washing outside and said, "This is freezing. I'm not going to go out there," but I washed up when I got into the barracks.

*When you got to Fallon, it was pretty different from where you left. What did you think of it?*

I felt that I was in space that I had never known before. It was so *open* and *clear* and *COLD*! Then I went into a camp where I had to sleep with a bunch of people that I never slept with before. I had to take showers with

these people. I had to bathe. I had to take care of my bunk. I had to take care of everything else. What happened was we played games on each other. When I got up one morning I put my shoes on—very comfortably and slowly—and tried to walk away. I couldn't. They nailed the front of the shoe to the floor.

*You played practical jokes on each other?*

Yes, there was short sheeting, too. I was a novice. They were going to give me the business, right? It was cute. At that time I didn't understand it, but I soon learned. Then we went out and rip-rapped on the dam, and that was out in the cold. One time an ice storm came up. We had storms in New York, but nothing where you could not stand outside. These pellets were *unbelievable*. I got under a tractor to get away from it. Finally I said, "Hey, that's stupid." I saw a cab open in one of the trucks. I jumped into that, but the noise was horrendous from that beating on top of the cab.

*That's quite different from the storms in the east?*

Yes, the storms were ice and snow in the east. I've never thought of crystals coming down that size. They must have been like golf balls. They put dents in the roof of that cab. I didn't like to do things that put me in a position where I was in serious danger. I heard about the snakes under the rocks. When you push a rock away, make sure there is no snake under because it'll attack—the rattlesnake. These are the rumors. I think they shot it to me to scare me, but, then I said, "Hey, let me get out of rip-rapping." Then I went and volunteered in the company to maintain what I could in the company.

*You only did rip-rapping for a little while?*

Short time. I went into that and a little truck driving, but I wanted to get out of the truck driving. I wanted to get into something else, so I was going to be repairing anything in the shop. They put me in charge of the kitchen, and they had a drain in the kitchen. I'll never forget this drain. It was a drain where the water used to wash down, when they wash the apparatus and the tubs and everything else, into a regular drain in the floor. It went down into the plumbing supply, wherever it went. It used to wash away all the time, because nobody knew how to make cement. I said, "OK, I'll fix that."

I went out and read what I could find anyplace, and that's where I found your school. I thought that it was a college—it was so big and beautiful and had such a beautiful campus.

*You're talking about the university in Reno?*

It wasn't a university. It was a high school.

It was fantastic. Well, I read, and then I picked that up. Then I came back and made the cement, and I started to fix this stuff. They thought it was a miracle, because nobody was able to do it, even those who were in charge, but they hired civilians to train us, to help us. To teach us to drive, to teach us mechanics, to fix automobiles—minor repairs and stuff like that. I took it upon myself and did that. Then I did the plumbing underneath. I learned how to do plumbing and to use lead-filled pipes. I hammered it in to keep it from leaking and worked underneath the structures. I didn't mind it. It was interesting. Then I did the normal things, too.

This one time we went to Fallon -- myself and about three or four fellows. I had never had any drinks in my life. We were going to be proud, smart guys. We went out, and we bought Four Feathers one time or Three



Feathers. They had an extra feather on the bottle or something else. We all drank this, and I thought it was great. I drank and drank. We were playing these slot machines, and this was one of the four—I think there were four different bars on that street—on the right hand side of Fallon at the time, and we picked one of them. I hit nickel slots, and the nickels went all over the floor, so I tried to pick them up. I was so drunk, I fell over. I had a lot of help, though; they were all scooping them up. Finally we wanted to go back to camp. Now, walking from there to camp in the state we were in was impossible, but we had an officer at that time. This happened to be November 24, 1938. It might be in your newspaper. Somebody went through and reported this.

It was three or four of us. He came along and felt sorry for us. He was a dog catcher and the mayor. He was everything in that town at that time. Whoever he was, he took us and put us in the back of a pickup and drove us to camp. The next morning I woke up was Thanksgiving Day. They had turkey and all that good stuff, and I missed that, because I was still in Never Never Land. Finally I woke up and said, “Oh, I feel terrible!”

I suffered. I made a speech, when I finally got to the mess room. I said, “Nobody ever touch that stuff again -- it’s poison.” [laughter]

They all laughed.

In the back of his building there... I don’t know if you know it or recall it, or I don’t know how old you are or what your circumstances were. In that town they had a big, circular water fountain with fish in it. I remember that. I thought they were going to throw us in the fish pond when he picked us up, but he didn’t. He was so nice, and I remember the niceties of Fallon. There was a JC Penney, I believe. That was the main store there, and I couldn’t go in there. I had no money, but I remember the store and that street. That street fascinated

me, because all the cars were parked in the middle of the street. I hear they’re still like that. They park in the middle of the street. Not all of them, but diagonally? On the curb, it’s the same thing, but the main thing was the theater and the popcorn in the theater. I used to go in there, and I thought that was great. I understand they’re still there—a soda fountain right next door.

*Do you remember some of the shows that you got to see at the theater?*

Oh, no. [laughter] I remember one thing in that soda fountain. I went in there, and they made a soda that I couldn’t believe anybody could make. I could not find out how they made it. I didn’t ask: I wasn’t that bright, but when I got home, I wanted to make the same type of soda fountain drink. I tried many different ways, and I found the way to do it. What you did was take the milk and put it in the freezer, and let it freeze up to a slush, and then make your soda drink. The way you normally made it, it was as thick as could be. And tasty? You wouldn’t believe. To that point, I still do that once in awhile. That drink was great. At that time, the skating and the skating rink was my fun thing. It had a skating rink there. I used to love that, and the funny part of it was that I never met any girls there.

I guess I wasn’t into that. I was 18, but I wasn’t into that yet. The funny part of this whole thing is I got back in March of 1938, and three or four months later I met the girl that would become my wife.

I used to walk out in the desert, and I used to see the mountains out in the distance. They were so beautiful—the colors at different times of the day. I’d say, “Hey, I’ve got to walk over there and touch them.”

The only thing that I could get from the kitchen was a couple of pieces of bread and

small oranges. I remember small oranges. I took those small oranges and the bread, and I started to head out to the mountains. I walked and walked, and I never thought of snakes or anything else, which was not like me. I was alert all the time, so what happened was, after I don't know how long, I said, "It's started to get dark so I better get back. I'll never find my way back."

I headed back again, and I never made it to the mountain. You know the mountains are an awful long distance from Fallon where I was looking.

*They look a lot closer than they actually are.*

It never got any bigger. It was an experience. One of the other things I used to do was to close the water from the dam to go out to feed the farm—they were sluice jets. For the winter they closed them so the water didn't freeze. When we closed those things, it used to trap trout in there. I would take a fork and would shape it to make it barbed, and then I would go out and spear the fish in the trap. I'd take them out, clean them, skin them, and throw them in the frying pan with a little butter and eat them. That was my pastime. They were good. I loved that.

I liked Fallon, and I'm sorry I didn't stay there, because I think it would have been a very nice life. From what I understand from Jane, Fallon has not changed very much.

*It's a little larger, but I think the atmosphere is the same.*

I remember being there with 4,000 people, which was the population of that town at that time. They had 400 guys from all over the country going into that town, and I'm sure we were a nuisance. They didn't seem to bother. They didn't mind. They didn't bother us at

all, but we were not really misbehaved, not like today. Today you would have drugs and everything else. Getting drunk that day was an experience I will never forget. They put me up against the wall to hold me, and I'd keep falling down. I recall these things, but that was a fun time in my life.

*You must have felt welcome in Fallon?*

Well, yes. Ever so much. They treated us like we belonged there. I think that was something that you don't find in New York. No matter where you are, you don't find it in New York. At that time, I saw New York as a mixture of everything in the world, but you didn't have to be afraid. I used to roller skate all over New York, because I was a great athletic person, and nobody ever bothered us. There were no girls being raped. There were no problems like that. Today, everything is a problem.

*You say you were an athletic person. When you were in Fallon, did you play any baseball or sports?*

They had some sports, and then we used to wrestle with the Indians. We boxed with them. They had boxing competitions. There was a race track there—not in Fallon, but close by -- so I tried to get into racing cars, but I never made the grade, I guess. Of course, I didn't stay there long enough. They didn't call me, and I didn't stay there long enough because I was too young. I didn't realize that I had something, a new experience that I should have stayed there to find out about what it was all about, and it was something I regret today.

*When you say that you had wrestling matches and boxing with the Indians, was that your only contact with them?*

It was an Indian competition. I don't know who arranged it, but it was there—boxing and wrestling. It was nothing more than friendly boxing and wrestling competitions.

*You would have been there in the winter, so you were probably looking at indoor things to do.*

Not necessarily. You know, the Indians were familiar with the weather there, and the weather there is drier than in New York and thereabouts. Like I said, they were washing up when I came there in October. When I got off that train, I was freezing at that, and they were out there throwing water all over themselves. You become acclimated to it, I guess. New York and Florida weather has got dampness in it, like today. It's a gorgeous day down here in Florida.

*It's a gorgeous day here, too, and I bet it's a lot drier than there. When you think about the most important thing you learned while you were in the CCC camp, what was it?*

I learned a little bit about myself. I didn't have the confidence that I should have had or thought I should have had. I found out when I was there that I could handle a lot of things that I figured I couldn't do. Like, when I said I wanted to take care of the company maintenance. What did I know about maintenance? Throughout my life, that was something that became predominant. I found out that, no matter what I wanted to do, I was able to do it.

*That was a pretty important thing to learn as a young man.*

It was very important, because I was able to determine when I had an order given to me, to take the order—if the order seemed

reasonable, that makes you survive. Later, I was in Africa. I was in the invasion of Italy, the invasion of Anzio. At the end of the war, in Italy, when the Germans surrendered, I wound up in the Pacific Theater after that. I went all over.

*What branch of the service were you in?*

I was in the army.

*Your CCC experience helped you with that?*

It gave me the ability to get along with people. Most men and women are bashful, even when they're the same sex together. They had to expose their bodies to showers and to go to the bathroom. They passed newspapers back and forth, reading them while they were sitting on the bowl. [laughter] I could have never got around that so quickly. Common things that happen didn't bother me at all.

*That's really interesting that you gained confidence. You learned to get along with a lot of different guys?*

No matter what came up, I was not afraid to confront it with a modicum of intelligence.

Life became not simple, but interesting. When I came out of the service—they wanted me to go in the army right away—everybody came out of the service when you were discharged. They said, "Go down the street, there, and take an application."

I said, "I don't want anything to do with that." Why would I want to be in a uniform position, where I had to do exactly what I had to do, even when I didn't want to do it? What I did was, I went off on my own into the world, and did whatever I wanted.



Many CCC enrollees enlisted in military service. Harry Norman was photographed in his army uniform in 1942.  
(Courtesy of Harry F. Norman Jr.)

*When you say when you got out of the army after the war, were they trying to keep people in the service?*

It was outside, telling me to go down to the local police station and apply for the police officer. I said, "I don't want that. I don't want to be instrumented again—put in the position where I have to salute somebody and do everything—I have to do this. I don't want that."

I don't care how many benefits you get out of it—medical or whatever they had. It was a pay all the time. I didn't want that. I wanted to get it my way, and I did. In all my

life, I never had gone into something that was orchestrated. I wound up doing everything. I did everything you can think of, and when I found out that this country was no longer what they promised in history and everything else—not detrimental to the country, but detrimental to myself—I didn't believe when you did something right, it was OK. When you did something right that made a company or somebody else not improve on the bottom line, then you were wrong. I got out of it almost when I was ready to retire. I said, "I don't want this anymore."

What did I do, then? I set up a curriculum, and New York State bought it, so I've trained students who didn't have academic standings but had to earn a living. I trained them how to work at the bench.

*What does that mean, "at the bench?"*

Manufacturing. Assembling. It was like electronic assembly as opposed to electronics per se. I set up a program for girls and boys. The state bought it, and they are still teaching it. I worked at that for about eighteen years before I retired, but before that I did everything. I worked at the first mechanical computers ever made. I worked the first printer boards that were ever made—first circuit boards. I had a good life. I had an enjoyable life—from my standpoint—of doing anything I wanted to and everything I wanted to without taking anything from my family.

*That attitude really started at the CCC. I want to ask you just a little bit more about the work. You said you were at the rip-rap area. Would you describe that a little bit to me?*

The rip-rap area was the tapering sides of the dam coming down, from the flow coming down from the dam itself. They didn't have



it all concrete. There was soil banked on the side. I don't know if they coated it with concrete after, but it was all soil on the sides. They took these gigantic boulders that they brought in on these trucks that we had. You'd take crow bars and push them off the truck onto the ground, and then you would take the crow bars and direct these boulders over onto the side of the dam—the tapered side they had where the water flowed out—to protect from soil erosion from the water spilling out. It hit these boulders, and these boulders were big.

*Describe about how big. Were they as big as a human or waist-high?*

36x36 was a small boulder. We would take crow bars or pry bars or whatever, and we worked them over. The trucks dropped them off as close as possible, and then we worked them over where they were supposed to be placed by direction of the employees that the government hired. We'd push them in, and finally they'd slide in. When you went away at night and came back the next morning, snakes would accumulate under there.

They did not necessarily do that all the time, but when you start to pry them, watch out. [laughter] Those snakes were there. Then you push the boulders in place. I said, "This is not for me." [laughter]

I had enough of that, and I looked at going to work in the camp.

*That's when you started doing repairs in the camp? Was it mostly plumbing repairs, or was it repairs on equipment and all kinds of things?*

It was mostly plumbing and some cleaning up of the coal furnaces that they.

They were the cast iron things with the plates on top. You lift them up, and you can put pots in them, boil water, and cook—the old-fashioned things. We used to grease them down with animal fat, and we used to brush it on there to make them shine. Clean them off. It wasn't cleaning them; it just made them shine, that's all. With the black back up, it made them shine. Then, of course, the food was very good from what I remember.

When somebody in the place didn't take a shower, we would take the kid and bring them into the shower—when he started to stink so bad that nobody could stand it—and put him in the shower and take these bristle brushes that you scrub the barracks with to keep it clean. We put him in there with soap. I think they called it Grandma's lye soap. We took that, and then we scrubbed them down with their clothes on and everything. After that, they took their showers. They kept clean. [laughter] We had to do it, because we couldn't stand the stench anymore.

*Did you have any squabbles?*

There were a few fights, but not too much. We got along pretty well. It depends on the individual—how aggressive the individual became, or how annoying he became. We had a pool table in the day room, and we had a commissary in the day room.

We got eight dollars a month, and the rest of the money went home. That money you could expend in a commissary, or you could take it as eight silver dollars. I wish I had some. I saved so many silver dollars. I wish I had saved up.

Anyhow, you would get chits—little cards or whatever—from the commissary, and you could get soda or cookies or whatever in the commissary with it. You could borrow on it for the next month's salary, too. In other



words, you got eight bucks. If you went over the eight bucks, you could borrow next month on it. In fact, when I left, I owed them. I owed them three dollars, due to the CCC store. Then they had a lieutenant in charge of the company that was one of the trainee lieutenants or whatever they called them.

*Was he a military man?*

Yes. I think I have his name here. Horace L. Freeman. Second Lieutenant. Reserves. Infantry Reserves. There was another one there. A.P. Barnard, Captain, who was also a reservist, but I don't know if that means anything.

*It does. It's very helpful.*

Those are the things that I recall, and I was discharged on March 24, 1939 at Ft. Dix, New Jersey.

*You got a train ride back again, too?*

Oh, yes, of course. There was one guy that was in the company, who was supposed to be a wealthy kid; that was the rumor. He wasn't supposed to be in there, but his family put him in there to sharpen him up or train him or punish him or whatever. He took off. You could leave the camp by yourself, because you weren't a prisoner. They would not chase you, but they would alarm the parents that you did so. Well, this kid took off, and I don't know whatever happened to him. He probably got home, but he was the only one that ran away from the camp that I know of. I don't remember his name.

*Most of the guys stayed then?*

They might have complained. We all complained, one way or the other, but they all stayed there. Where are you going to go? It was bad times.

*With having food and shelter, that was an important thing then?*

Yes, for most of us. Well, I left my mother's place. We had a rental place in Midland Beach, Staten Island, and I went to school there at night and did what I had to do. When I came back, I made sure that I didn't go into a drudge. I made out pretty well. I wound up teaching.

*Are there any favorite memories or stories that you want to tell me about that time in Fallon?*

The only one I can remember is when I got up to make that speech. "Don't drink! This is terrible stuff!" I remember that because everybody cracked up. [laughter] I got up, and I was so sick. It didn't cure me.

*It didn't cure you. You went back to it, yes?*

I went back. Well, the job I had required me to be totally social with everybody that I was involved with, because I worked with the government, for private people, and everything else. It was an interesting life, but I still miss Fallon. I'd love to be back, but it's not something you do arbitrarily. I would have done it with my wife, but she's gone. Nobody else is interested. Who would be interested but me? They don't have the skating hole anymore. It's probably a grocery store or a Sam's or something like that. [laughter]

*Thank you for your help.*

## ELMER R. RANDALL

*Victoria Ford: My name is Victoria Ford, and today is July 6, 2000. I'm here with Randy and Mardene Randall, and we're going to be talking to Randy about the CCC camp at Panaca. First of all, when you entered the CCC program, where were you living at the time? Were you living in Nevada?*

Elmer R. Randall: I had been principal of Virgin Valley High School, and my wife didn't like the Virgin Valley. It got to 120 degrees, and we didn't have air conditioning. We had to haul our water in from five miles further east, in a fifteen-hundred-gallon tank. Then we'd dump it in a cistern and had to go back and get another one. [laughter] Fifteen hundred gallons, you know.

*Was that just for your home, or was that for the town?*

The whole town. Now, let's talk about the lights. There was Nate Abbott, and he had a

Coler plant. He had several houses on this Coler plant of his.

*What's a Coler plant?*

It's just a little engine that turns around and generates electricity.

*Nate Abbott provided the electricity then.*

If you wanted electricity after seven o'clock, you had to make arrangements with him, and if you wanted it before seven, you had another argument with him. [laughter]

Mardene Randall[M]: [laughter] Excuse me. That was one of the reasons that his wife didn't like Bunkerville.

*How many students were there when you were principal at Virgin Valley?*

I'd say eighty.

*They were all from the surrounding area?*

Yes.

*Your wife didn't like it there, and was that the reason you went with the CCC camp then?*

No, I just quit. I had my own furniture down there, and I moved my wife and the kids up to the cabin and parked them with her folks in Idaho. I was going to say before I got unhooked with somebody over by Montpelier, Idaho. I was in Idaho, and he came down and offered me a job.

I said, "No, I have an application in for the CCC's, so I expect that to come in before long, and I don't want to go up there to your school if I can only stay a month or six weeks," or whatever it was.

He says, "Well, you come on out, and when you have to go, we'll release you."

I had a travel trailer of my own that I built, so I took this out to the town of Georgetown. It was in October that my application went through and was approved, so I loaded up my kids and my wife and headed out there.

*That's when you headed to Panaca, is that right?*

That's when we headed to Panaca.

*How many kids did you have at that point?*

Three.

*Three children and your wife.*

I didn't have Becky then, did I?

M: No, sweetheart. That was when you were with Margaret.

I didn't get Becky until we were through with Idaho.

*You'd left your principal's job, and you were headed to Panaca. What was your job at Panaca?*

I was the education advisor. I done everything there was. [laughter]

*Describe to me what all you did.*

M: He enlarged the job description. [laughter]

I made it so nobody else wanted it. [laughter]

*Did you teach the boys there at the camp?*

Yes.

*What kinds of things did you teach them?*

Reading, writing, and math. They called a dollar a big one and the dime, a little one.

M: These boys that were in your camp... were from where in the country?

Tennessee, South Carolina.

M: Hill people?

The kids that couldn't get a job anywhere, you know.

*So a lot of them didn't have their education, either, then?*

That's right.







*With taking these courses, could they finish high school, or was it just to get them up to speed? Could they get a diploma?*

We didn't have that big a faculty. I figured that they might pick it up someplace after they got out, but I had to give them some fundamentals. I had two or three assistant educational advisors, and I had control of the kids: if I say they didn't go out on a recreation trip, they didn't go because they weren't studying. [laughter]

*What kind of work were the kids doing there?*

This was a forestry job, and the forest rangers would see something that needed done out in the area, so they'd come and talk to our supervisors. Then the next day, one of our trucks would go out with the kids and take care of it.

*When did you get to work with them? Did you work with them in the evenings or in the daytime?*

I did afternoon, if there were some there, and evenings every day.

*Afternoons and evenings were for study. You said that you got to decide whether they got a trip to town or not. What was that based on?*

Thursday nights were our recreation night, and we had two places to go: one was Caliente and the other one was Pioche. If they were bad citizens, I wouldn't let them get on the bus to go up to Pioche.

*You were in charge of more than just reading and writing and arithmetic, right?*

Yes.

M: Discipline, too.

*Discipline and citizenship?*

Yes.

*What kinds of problems did you have with these kids from Tennessee and South Carolina?*

M: Homesickness?

[laughter] Yes, homesickness. Most of the kids were under twenty years old.

*When you had discipline problems, what was usually the problem? What kinds of things did they pull?*

They sassed their people and truckers, so I had two or three assistant educational advisors that I had appointed; so they were directly under me. If I didn't like what they were doing to these assistants, they got rapped.

*About how many guys were there at the camp?*

I'd say about sixty.

*You mentioned that there was a spike camp, too.*

At Alamo we had about ten or fifteen men out of our home camp, and we had about twenty down back in Virgin Valley, in Bunkerville, my hometown. [laughter]

*Were you born in Bunkerville?*

No.

*That was where you were teaching.*



I learned a lot from down there. [laughter]  
I was born in Ogden, Utah.

*That's what I thought you said. I'm curious because a lot of people went into the CCC because the Depression was having such a bad impact on families and so on.*

Kids couldn't get a job, and these guys were a little too young to go in the army.

*Was this the last eleven months or so of this camp?*

Yes.

*Our statistics show that it closed at the end of June in 1941. Were you there during that last time?*

At that time.

*Were you there when it closed?*

Yes.

*What happened?*

We got up to Ely, and there was a camp just north of Ely. I don't remember what the name of that was. I'm thinking a long ways back—fifty or sixty years. [laughter]

*Take your time. Did you work at that camp north of Ely, too?*

Yes.

*You were also at the Indian Springs camp.*

The situation was this with Indian Springs: three educational advisors in the area—that included me—were all sent there

at the same time, and I had all my men and all the records there. Plus, there were two other guys with the same job. [laughter] They had their men and the records there, so we'd just sit down and look at each other for three days.

[laughter]

I knew I wasn't going to get to stay, because I'd been on the job only about seven months so I traded something at the main office in Salt Lake City. I said, "Hey! When you send me back once you've been out here, I want you guys to just send me the carpenters or just send me the mechanics." I said, "because I got six Indians here, and they all want to do something different, and I don't have any faculty."

They really got warm on that. They were about to get all set up, but the camps were closed.

*Then all the camps were closed?*

Yes.

*I'm looking here, and it looks like there were maybe three camps up by Ely, and one closed in July of 1941. Then one closed in May of 1942. Were you at the one that closed in July of 1941? Did it close right after the one at Panaca? If so, you wouldn't have been there very long.*

No. I guess we were trying to trace the guys that went to Ely, right?

*Did they go from Panaca to Ely, and you went with them?*

My outfit went, but there were three other outfits just like it.

*You and your educational advisors, the boys, and the boys' records went up there?*

Yes. We took a worker or two along. There were some guys that knew about geology, and there were some guys that knew about fences; they knew about forest fire and all that stuff. We took them along—some of the advisors. They didn't get any more money than they did originally, but that's what happened to them.

*You just moved the whole thing up there.*

Yes. In about a week after we got there, orders came through from Salt Lake to turn over the men and their records to me and take their leave of absence. Effectively, they were fired.

*I see. You did get to stay?*

Yes. Then I got moved out to Marman Ranch.

*Marman Ranch? Was that near Ely, too?*

Yes. Just out of Ely. It was about fifty miles between Ely and Reno.

*It was fifty miles then to Marman Ranch, and that was fifty miles outside of Ely. OK. How long were you at that one then?*

[laughter] Not very long. I heard that there was a superintendent job up in Firth, Idaho, and I wrote to Catherine Terguson. She was in Salt Lake City, and she had the teachers' agency there—hiring teachers and so on. When I was at Ely, she called me and told me that Firth needed a superintendent, so I got right in the car and took off for Firth.

*What did you think of your experience in the CCC camp? Did you like working with these boys?*

It's fine. What have you got when you teach in Rigby school down there? You got more parents looking over the fence at you than you got kids. [laughter] They'll give you the hammer on the head if you don't do what they want you to do. There, the kids and the teachers were a thousand miles away.

*Yes, the kids weren't near home, so their parents couldn't look over their shoulder.*

We didn't have too many of any kind of kids there. Maybe a half a dozen were trying to learn to read. Then some of them studied a little mathematics, but none of them got too far. In the first place, I didn't start school until two thirty in the afternoon.

*You didn't get them for very long each day.*

I enjoyed the CCC's a lot, though.

M: You had a good idea for getting them organized, you know: handling one vocation at one plant and another around.

*You could have been teaching the same subject to different groups all day, at different times. That never materialized while you were there?*

No, but there was another thing they liked. It seems like out there in Salt Lake the boss out there told me, "You take your stuff out to so-and-so and hand it to the boss."

By the time I got there, which was only a couple of days away, they had replaced the guy that had been boss with another guy, who became boss, and he was unhappy with me

when I walked right past him to talk to the second in command. [laughter]

*The headquarters for all of those camps that you were working in Nevada, that was all through Salt Lake City?*

Yes.

*Was it through the forestry service at Salt Lake City?*

No, it was military. They had military offices in lots of places, because we were having trouble with Japan.

*You said that they were doing forestry work. Were they doing any other kinds of work? You mentioned mechanics and some other things.*

Yes, they could build a fence, if they wanted them to build fence. They could put in culverts. When I first got there, the doctor came over to my office—we had a doctor on the job, too. He came over to my office, and he said, “You know anything about plumbing?” I said, “No.”

And he said, “Well, come with me.” [laughter]

The bathroom had been leaking so long it was all deteriorated. It wouldn’t hold a nail or a screw or anything. He said, “Can you handle this?”

I said, “Yes, if I got time.”

In three days I had it all put together just as good as it was when it was new.

*That was part of your job as the educational advisor then? [laughter]*

I didn’t have to do that. I could have said, “Go to town and get a plumber,” but I was pitching for good will. I was brand new.

No sooner had I gotten that done than about as far as from here to across the street, the mess hall was falling in the septic tank.

M: [laughter]

Now, the septic tank is about as big as that front window is and fifty feet long, and the roof had caved in. What does a man with a pen and pencil do about that? [laughter]

*What did you do about that?*

The foreman came over to me, because he’d seen what I’d done with the bathrooms. I said, “Yes, I think I can do that.”

I looked at the damage before I told him that, and they had posts about ten or twelve feet long sticking about a foot apart—maybe a little more, you know—all up there. Then, they had net and wire on the outside and straw down there. They had a peaked roof like this, and I said, “Yes, I can take care of that then.”

He says, “How many men you want?”

I said, “Twenty.” [laughter]

“How long will it take you to fix this?”

I said, “Three weeks.” [laughter]

I had it done then with time to spare. Boy, the lid was off then. Anybody who wanted to sharpen a toothpick, they’d come and get me.

*It sounds like the camp was in disrepair when you arrived.*

It was. They didn’t have the personnel. Everybody said, “Get Joe, get Joe, you know,” so I took the gun and went and got Joe. When I left they tore it down. [laughter]

*Did these kids from Tennessee and South Carolina tell you what they thought of Nevada? It’s pretty different from where they came from.*

They didn't grumble much because they had three meals coming. They didn't have to work too hard, and everybody treated them with respect. They didn't treat them like second cousins.

*Having the food was pretty important during the Depression.*

Yes, it sure was.

M: And clothing.

*Did they get pay and then send part of it home?*

I think they got sixty bucks a month.

*Sixty a month? Then they sent part of it back home, right?*

Yes, they had the option to send it back.

*Did they have a choice about what work they did, or were there just certain jobs that they all had to do?*

I had some pretty good foremen on the jobs, and they pretty well knew what the kids could do. They'd load them all on a truck, take them twenty miles out in the hills, work them until three o'clock in the afternoon, and then bring them in.

*Then you got to teach them.*

Yes, then I got them. [laughter]

*What did you do with that part of the day when they were out working away from the camp?*

I was working with my assistants.

*Repairing the camp and so on?*

Yes.

*Your teaching assistants helped?*

Yes.

*What was it about the CCC camps that you liked?*

The freedom from people.

*Freedom from people looking over your shoulder?*

I got fifty kids out there looking over the fence. I got fifty mothers and fathers back in Tennessee, and that's where I wanted them. [laughter]

*That's where you wanted them? [laughter] That way you could just do your job without being second guessed, right?*

I knew what I wanted to do, and I knew how to do it right, so I did it. In schools you might not have such good luck.

*Tell me a little bit about your background. You were a principal of a school. What kind of education did you have?*

I went to Weber College for two years. That's in Ogden, Utah. I played both football and basketball. I was All-Conference football and All-Conference basketball. I showed you the watch I got, so you know I'm not stringing you. [laughter]

*Did you get a bachelor's degree or a master's degree?*

At Weber College you get AA degrees, Associate of Arts. That's what I got out of Weber. Then, at the end of that two years I went to Logan—Utah State,—and I was there two years. I got straight "A" grades the last six quarters I was there, and I was there for eight quarters.

*Then was that a bachelor's degree from Utah State that you got?*

Yes.

*Did you go on from there?*

I went to McCammon, Idaho, and coached. I was the first coach hired out of Utah State. That was in April, and school wasn't out until June, so I had a big lead on it. There wasn't another coach hired until August, so I was tickled about that job.

*Then you coached at Idaho, McCammon.*

Yes.

*Where did you go from there?*

I got to tell you about having an undefeated football team in McCammon. We won the basketball tournament down there. It wasn't too great. There were only six schools, I guess.

M: Excuse me, but in the little schools back then I think the coaches also had to teach several subjects, right?

They sure did. [laughter] Yes.

*So you taught, too. What were you teaching?*

Math and science.

*You'd been teaching, and then you went from teaching to being a principal?*

There wasn't an authorized principal in McCammon, because this guy that was superintendent of schools was doing that job, but he was walking down the street one day and fainted and fell on this concrete. They took him to the hospital, and he sent word back to have me run the school.

*That's how you got some experience in running the whole show then.*

Then my hometown, Rigby, Idaho, canned their coach and contacted me to see if I'd come up and coach. I knew Stubby Nelson, Leo Nelson. He was the guy that they canned. I liked him, but he was out, so I took the job up there and was there four years. I had the undefeated football team and an undefeated basketball team.

*You were teaching, then, and this would have been the Depression years when you were teaching.*

You better believe it. [laughter] We hardly got enough money to buy salt.

*But you had a job and you had steady income?*

Yes.

*Was teaching pay pretty low at that time?*

Yes.

*Do you remember what it was?*



Fifteen hundred a year.

*For a family of three?*

Not very much.

M: Some of the things he said awhile ago made him sound very autocratic, but his students loved him.

Yes.

M: They still keep in touch with him, those who are alive. He still gets Christmas cards, and they stop to see him whenever they go through Reno. The girls all had a crush on him. He was so handsome.

*You said the camp was sort of decrepit and falling down, but tell me about the food and the medical service. There was a doctor right there. What were the living conditions like at Panaca camp?*

Good. There were big buildings in the shade, in a clean area, and in town.

*It wasn't outside of town. Did the CCC boys and the town people get together very much? Did they like each other or not like each other?*

I don't think most of the locals thought too much of the boys. They were afraid of them.

*Were they?*

As an educational advisor in control of the boys, I had to take some pretty strong measures against them. That's part of the discipline I was telling you about. If those kids got smart with a guy down there, we wouldn't let him go on a recreation trip. The townspeople wouldn't want their daughters

going out with these uneducated ruffians, and that's where some of the friction came in.

M: I wasn't there, but I know the kind.

*You've heard this story, right? [laughter]*

M: Yes.

*That was part of the problem: they were afraid of having those boys around their girls, right?*

Wouldn't you be?

*Well, yes, if I was in a small town and wanting to raise my kids, but you were pretty strict with the guys.*

Yes, and I was big enough to handle them. If you're big enough to kick hell out of them, you don't have to. [laughter]

*It sounds like what you did was restrictions and that kind of thing. If they weren't behaving themselves, they couldn't go away from the camp.*

They were under my thumb. I had the backing of the first and second officers around there, and I had the moral support of the doctor. They got checking him out. He lacked one high school course in history to qualify for a medical degree in Nevada.

*Did you teach him the history so he could get it?*

[laughter] I snuck right on down to Virgin Valley High School and put the old boy's grades where they'd do him the most good. [laughter]

M: I didn't see what happened. [laughter]

*[laughter] I see how you fixed that.*

M: The Virgin Valley High School was not accredited until he got there, and he got it accredited.

*What kinds of things did the kids have, that the doctor treated? Was it just colds and things, or were there any major illnesses or accidents?*

Sunburns and scabbed knees and black eyes. They'd fight each other once in awhile.

*They were fighting each other sometimes?*

Once in awhile.

*No major accidents though while you were there?*

No.

*What kind of recreation did they have? Did they have ball teams? Did they play pool?*

Yes, they had baseball and basketball. I was the basketball coach, but that's one tournament I didn't win.

*Did they play the towns around there?*

No.

*Who did they play?*

They played among their own CCC group.

*Did you coach and teach then, the same as at the school?*

Yes.

*Do you think that the town appreciated any of the work that they did? They appreciated that.*

I'm sure they did after they saw the effect of it. Our doctor in town didn't solicit private business; he just took care of the kids. I guess if he'd seen one man down, grasping for his last breath, he'd have fixed him.

*There wasn't a doctor in the town?*

No.

*Was that doctor allowed to work with the town's people?*

No.

*Panaca is pretty much away from everything. What's the closest big town to that at that time?*

Chicago.

*Chicago? [laughter] Good point. Las Vegas wasn't very big at that time, was it?*

No, it wasn't. My basketball team beat them.

*The Virgin Valley basketball team beat Las Vegas?*

Yes.

M: Can you imagine that?

*When you went from Panaca up to Indian Springs outside of Ely, and then the other camp outside of Ely, were those camps in similar condition? Were the buildings in disrepair, or was there a difference between the camps?*

I don't know. We started a new camp out on Marman Ranch. It was about forty-five miles east of Ely.

*It was east, not west, right?*

That's right. When I was on my trip to Ely, I found the old campsite.

M: When he says not long ago, that could mean fifteen or twenty years. [laughter]

*But you could see the rocks? Is it right along Highway 50?*

No, you got to go about twenty-five miles north after you get forty-five miles west.

*West. OK. Forty-five miles west of Ely and then twenty-five miles north?*

Yes.

*You could still see. That's the camp that you helped start—you helped build it?*

Yes.

*Did they start out living in tents?*

Yes, but not for long. When you got sixty guys carrying the wood and stuff around... [laughter]

*You build cabins pretty fast, right?*

Yes.

*At the camps did they have a cook, somebody who just did the cooking?*

You bet! We specialized in cooks and bakers in our camp.

M: You trained the boys for that?

Some things just kept growing. What are you going to do? I decided to be a baker, you know. It's a chance to learn. And that's what we had going all the time I was there.

*The guys would learn to cook and then would cook for the whole group?*

Yes. The top sergeant was the boss of all kids. Anytime he had trouble with the kids, they had to go to the officers if they wanted relief. We had a well-run group, and they were scared of most of us.

*So you took the boys and everything from Panaca up to Ely, and then did they also go to the Marman camp?*

Yes.

*Then you still had these same boys from Tennessee and South Carolina?*

Yes. Anyway, we woke up and all those guys and teachers and officers came, and we all sat down there in the dust and waited for the word from Salt Lake of who was to keep working and who was to go home.

*This was at the Sunnyside camp? There were people that came from Sunnyside camp?*

Yes, I never did see the camp. I just heard there was one down there, because it was clear out of our line of travel, going south to Vegas or west to Carson City.

*That's Sunnyside. You said it was twenty-five miles west of Ely and then forty miles south, right?*

About.

*We'll have to see what we can find out about that one. Is there anything else that you can tell me about the camp at Panaca or any of those other two camps? Are there any interesting stories that you remember or particular guys that you remember?*

None that I dare tell.

*There were some of those, right?*

M: He's teasing.

*Was your family able to go with you to these?*

Yes.

*Did you live in the camp with your family?*

Yes. I had a travel trailer.

*It was a travel trailer that you just set up in the camp?*

I built it.

*I was going to say that was early for travel trailers.*

[laughter] It sure was. I built that travel trailer while I was in Virgin Valley. I had one classroom that we didn't use, so I took that over. It was my carpenter shop, and I built this travel trailer inside.

M: Did the kids help you?

Nobody helped me.

*You did this yourself, so you built it inside then. How did you get it out?*

That's why everybody was laughing, you know. "Hell, you'll never get that out of there."

Now like that wall over there, I built a whole wall. The people smart enough to measure the wall made it the height of the hole, so it still wouldn't go up, but they didn't measure it on a slant, see. From that corner down here to this corner is farther, and from this corner up like that. I measured that all out before I nailed a board together. [laughter]

*I don't have any more questions. [addressing Mardene] Do you remember any stories that he might have told that we haven't covered?*

M: No. After you leave, he'll remember because you've stirred up his memory, so you might want to check back, or I'll call you if something comes up that I think you might have missed.

Just drop in anytime.

*Well, thank you. Thanks for your help on this.*





## EDMUND ROSOWSKI

*Victoria Ford: Today is September 30, 2000, and my name is Victoria Ford. I'll be speaking with Edmund Rosowski on the telephone about the CCC camps in Nevada. Do you go by Edmund or Ed?*

Edmund Rosowski: Ed is all right.

*The first thing we want to do, Ed, is talk a little bit about your family at the time you went into the CCC program. Tell me about your parents.*

At the time I went into the C's, both my parents were deceased, and I lived with my sister in Orchard Park, New York, which is thirty miles south of Buffalo, New York. I graduated from a Franciscan-run high school. At the time there wasn't much work around, so I briefly enlisted in the CCC's in New York. It lasted only about three months, because my sister purchased a grocery store, and I was released from the CCC's to work in there.

That lasted a while. However, the store was not too successful. I was getting restless

and saw they were recruiting CC's to go West. I had no idea how far West it would be. The physical exam given at the entry in Buffalo was in the post office building, and it was a pretty thorough physical examination.

*Do you remember how you heard about the CCC's going West? Was it in the newspaper?*

It was advertised in the *Buffalo Evening News*.

*You saw that and decided to check it out?*

Yes, and I went in and was accepted.

*The induction physical was at the post office building?*

I believe it was at the old post office. At the present time, it's part of the University of Buffalo.

*What happened after the induction? Tell me what happened next.*

We gathered at a railroad station, and for what seemed like weeks, we rode the train out of Buffalo. Why did we go more or less south towards Pennsylvania? Maybe that's the way the railroads run.

Anyway, we went through Pennsylvania and then across. It was probably about a week on a troop train. It had a dining room. Occasionally the train would stop, and we were allowed to get out of the train and stretch our legs outside, although we were not allowed to roam too far, because without notice the train would move on again.

*You had a dining car and everything on this train?*

It was a rather long train—probably twelve or fourteen cars with baggage cars and dining. I don't know if it was just one dining car or more, but anyway, they fed us three times a day.

*That's interesting because one other person said that they only got fed twice a day on the train he was on, but you got three meals a day?*

We got three meals. The breakfast was rather sparse. However, I never was much of an eater so the other two meals were sufficient for me.

*They were just fine? When did you find out where exactly you were going to go?*

When we got there.

*You didn't know the whole way out?*

Nope. Somewhere the rumor came up that we were going to Nevada, but where in Nevada, I had no idea until we got there.

*That must have seemed like an awful long trip not knowing where you were going.*

Yes, it did. We either slept or played cards all the way.

*When you got to Nevada, where did you stop first?*

We pulled into Winnemucca. Then we were loaded on to stake-body trucks, which are flat trucks with benches inside and canvas covers over the top.

*Was it a military truck?*

They all had Forest Service emblems on them.

*Is Forest Service the agency that ran the camp you went to?*

As far as the projects were concerned, it was the Forest Service duty. However, the camp was run by the army. All our clothes and everything else were army issue.

*So they loaded you on this truck, and then what happened?*

We traveled about forty miles north to Paradise Valley, and we unloaded.

*What was there when you got there?*

Just barracks, and what they called a cadre of personnel, which means a starter group. It was the cooks and the educational advisor, which was a Mr. Mitchell at that time. That's about all I can remember. That particular night they came in, and I think they fed us and assigned us the barracks, which had double-

tiered bunks. There were probably thirty or forty CCC personnel in each one.

*In each barracks?*

At least twenty different separate double bunks.

*You were in there pretty tight, yes?*

Yes, the barracks are quite large. In every barracks they left a space for a locker. There wasn't any place where you could hang anything in a closet-type thing, so everything you owned, or at least that was issued to you, was in your foot locker.

*You found your bed, you found your barracks, and then, did they feed you that night, too?*

I believe they gave us a supper, yes.

*You got there late in the day, did you?*

I think it was dark.

*So, you didn't exactly know where you were?*

I didn't even know there were mountains around us until the next morning.

*What was your impression the next morning?*

Surprise. I was pretty happy with the surroundings.

*What was your job while you were there?*

Basically my job was with the trucks. I was tested and assigned a truck to drive. That's what you do. You go where they tell you.

*Were you hauling something?*

Most of the time, the job I was concerned with personally as a truck driver was making roads. The CCC crews would go out and make roads into the mountains as perhaps a route to go in case of a fire.

*They were kind of helping with the fire control there.*

Right. In other words, we were making roads up canyons. The trucks were mostly three-quarter or half-ton small Chevrolets, which used to blow the axles very easily.

*Did that happen to you?*

It happened a couple of times. They were not automatic at that time. If you let out the clutch too soon with a heavy load, you just stood there, because you probably broke one of the axles. Then somebody had to come in, which finally turned out to be my job in a little while. I was assigned a pick-up, because I was changed from ordinary truck driver to what they called a truck master. This did not happen right after I got in there, but a short time after—maybe two or three months after I was in. I was assigned a pick-up and carried extra axles. If there was trouble, somebody would come in, or if I happened to be around, I learned enough about the operation to repair it.

*Did you have any mechanical training before you got there?*

I knew a little bit about motors. I don't know anything about the new ones. At that time, I knew some. I could repair basic problems, although we did have mechanics

in the crews that did actually repair those vehicles.

*You would help with repairs, but you were mostly just there as a back-up and to oversee everyone as a truck master?*

Yes.

*Let me ask you about these roads. Once the roads were built, were there any other jobs that they did in that area, or was it entirely just to build the roads?*

Do you have any idea what a drift fence is?

*Yes, I do. For the snow?*

That was one of the jobs. In the spring they would go out and repair drift fences for the cattle control then.

*They were helping with the grazing land, too?*

As a rule, the lower land was probably owned by the individual ranchers. However, the higher elevations were public property.

*Do you remember if it was Forest Service?*

I just remember what the price was for it. Anyway, it was for a ranch that had cattle.

*Do you think it was probably Forest Service land or BLM or something?*

Have you ever been to a place called Orovada? It's north of Winnemucca towards Paradise Valley?

*I know where it is, yes.*

There's a monument there of five New York City boys that died in that fire in that range.

*Were you there when that fire went through?*

Yes. I wasn't there at the time of the fire, but at the time they died. However, I was there in the camp at the time. My job was someplace else. I don't remember where I was at the time.

*Did you know the boys that were killed?*

Yes.

*Where was the fire located that they were killed in?*

It was on the Orovada side of the range, which is Santa Rosa, I believe, or something like that.

*Everybody else was out firefighting or just several of them were?*

There was a whole crew there at the Santa Rosa Range. I don't know whether we were the only camp involved or if there were others, but the ones that died were from our camp.

*Tell me what happened when everyone learned that these five boys were killed.*

Well, I guess there was sadness, but probably those that really knew them close—who were real friends of those—were affected more than just the general campus.

*Was there any memorial service or anything?*

There was a memorial service at the time.



Rosowski was stationed at Camp Paradise during the Orovada fire in 1939. Five CCC firefighters perished during the brush fire in the Santa Rosa Mountains. This monument was erected to honor the New Yorkers who never returned home alive.  
(BLM Winnemucca District Office)

*Was the monument erected right at that time?*

Right. In the Orovada area. I don't remember just exactly where.

*I've seen pictures of it, so we were very interested in learning about what happened. Do you know exactly how they were killed?*

The way I understand it is that they were fighting a fire on a steep slope. The fire itself creates a draft called a back draft. It goes up in front of you and then sweeps over the back, to your rear—to behind you. They were in that area, and they tried to run. However, I guess the heat and the fumes got to them, because as

far as I know, they were not severely burned. They seemed to have died of asphyxiation.

*That's really a tragedy. There was a memorial service and the monument?*

I have a picture where there are dignitaries and that. I remembered the foreman, Mr. Pasqualle, was in charge of erecting the monument, because he was in charge of the masonry work that was done by the CCC's.

*Mr. Pasqualle was the foreman?*

He was the foreman at the time. I don't know who the foreman was at the fire site.



*He was the foreman of the whole camp, though?*

No, he was the foreman of the masonry work.

*Tell me a little bit more about the people—the guys that were in charge like Mr. Pasqualle. Was he a local person?*

No, some of those were local. I don't know where Mr. Pasqualle came from. They had a man named Sam Worthington, who was a local Nevadan. He used to have a ranch in the area, and for what reason he gave up ranching, I don't know. They had a man by the name of Charles... (well, I may think of it). Anyway, he was another man that operated heavy equipment. In other words, he was in charge of bulldozers and machinery of that sort. Then there was Mr. Timmons. You know Edie, or you spoke to her?

*Yes, Edna Timmons.*

Mr. Timmons was in charge of the mechanic parts of the trucks. He was the chief mechanic of the camp.

*He was from up by Midas, right?*

Yes, in fact, Mrs. Timmons, I believe, still lives there at times. We visited them about five years ago. I drove there, and it's really up in the mountains. Beautiful.

*It is beautiful. I had a chance to talk to Edna Timmons a couple of years ago. She's just wonderful. It's been about five years since you have been there? I know somebody's been talking to her, and we want to make sure that she tells what she remembers about her husband's work, too.*

He was in charge of the garage. In other words, he was my immediate superior.

*I was going to say, you must have worked closely with him. Tell me a little bit more about the camp. Most days you were out driving your truck. Did you do that five days a week or seven?*

Yes, it was my chief occupation. I not only drove as a truck master, but one of the jobs was to be sure that each driver maintained his truck properly, that he checked the oil and all that stuff that's necessary to keep a truck operational. That was my biggest job, as well as to watch out for drivers that perhaps drove too fast or too recklessly or something like that. I also drove a truck called a FWD. It's a big four-wheel drive dump truck.

One of the jobs I had was to pull a trailer—a flat-body trailer perhaps thirty feet long—and occasionally I moved some equipment from one area to another. However, most work I did was to haul fence posts from the lower part of Utah, an area south of Salt Lake City at a place called the Desert Range Experimental Station Farm, where they experimented with grass that could survive long droughts. It's out there. I went there several times and brought back fence posts from that area. They were cedar scrub trees, but they were straight enough for at least seven or eight feet and would make a very good fence post. That's what we used in these drift fences.

One of the most boring jobs that I ever saw was during the first time I came there. I saw a man way out in the field, and he had a squared off piece of grass, twelve inches by twelve inches and was picking the seeds out and counting them. He had to find out how productive this particular brand of grass was that they were trying to raise, whether it could regenerate itself.

When we were on the road, we were allowed per diems. I believe it was like either two and a half or three dollars a day for food as well as gasoline that was necessary. We would stop at various other CCC camps and re-supply the fuel for the trucks.

*Where were some of the camps that you stopped at?*

I never paid much attention. There were some around Tonopah, Nevada, but there was one near Austin, Nevada, and Ely. I remember the towns, but exactly where and the numbers of the camps, I don't remember.

*Tell me a little bit about the basics at the barracks. You had just barracks there when you arrived. Was there anything more that was built while you were there?*

At the original Paradise Valley, all the buildings were there when I arrived.

*Did you have any medical care there?*

Yes. I remember a Dr. Anderson at Paradise Valley. He was quite a gentleman. At Paradise Valley we had an ambulance that would take any severe patients to a hospital. I never personally drove one very far; however, they did take some people as far as Sacramento. It would go through Reno, up the mountains, across, and go to Sacramento Hospital, because there was an army hospital there.

*If they had something like appendicitis, they had to go?*

I remember there was a boy who had appendicitis, and why they went that far, I

have no idea. Maybe it was because it was cheaper or something, I don't know.

*Did you think the food was pretty good?*

It was very good. We had a variety—a lot of fruit and everything else. Whatever fruit was in season, we probably had it, and it was a lot of canned stuff, of course. As far as any dried food, I don't know if there was any in existence at that time.

*What did everybody do in the camp for fun?*

They had a pool table and a ping pong table. There was occasionally something resembling the war-time USO. They used to come in.

*Did they have dances at it?*

They had dances. We had dances at camp sponsored by the CCC, and we would usually just go into Winnemucca and bring girls out. It was very strictly chaperoned.

Those dances would probably go until about 11 o'clock, and then, they would be back home by midnight at least.

There was one chaperone for every one girl that got in. [laughter]

*What was your reception by Winnemucca? That was the closest town?*

I never found any antagonism. They liked the extra money that was coming into town. I never found any resentment as such. You know, that they talk down to you or anything else like that.

*They always seemed pretty friendly to you?*



Yes, as far as I can remember, I never had any trouble with the citizens.

*Was Winnemucca pretty much the place you went if you were going to town?*

That's as far as we ever took anybody for recreation.

*Were there any other sports or anything going on?*

The only thing I remember is during the fall season, Winnemucca used to have a rodeo, and we would bring the citizens from the camp over for a day of rodeo.

*What about baseball or anything like that?*

The camp had a team, and they would play local high school teams.

*What years were you there in Paradise Valley?*

I remember when I came home, which was the fall before Pearl Harbor.

*It was in the fall of 1941.*

Yes, but probably from 1939 on. I was in longer than regulations, because I think somewhere around twenty-five was the legal age for anybody to stay in. However, regulations permitted older ones if they were in key positions. In other words, they used to call them project assistants. Actually, we were, more or less, technically transferred from the CCC to the Forest Service. Now whether that was actually just a way of telling us what we were doing, whether it was actually done, or whether it was just an excuse for keeping us there, I can't say.

*Because you were truck master, you were able to stay longer?*

Yes, and I guess I must have been doing a pretty good job because they kept me.

*You were over twenty-five then, at that point?*

Yes.

*Then you left in the fall of 1941?*

I came home around the fall of 1940, probably in August. Then I got drafted the following Easter. I went to the army on Good Friday.

*Where did you serve during World War II?*

After basic training, I volunteered for the parachutes and became a paratrooper, and we shipped to Africa. I had very little military squabble, as you call it, because Africa by that time was pretty well quiet. Most of my operations were in the invasion of Sicily. That's where I got hurt, and that was the end of me.

*So you had a short time in the military?*

All that training for very little time.

*When you think back on your time in the CCC, what kinds of things do you think you learned?*

I think I learned how to get along with people a little better. I never was much for coming up to somebody, introducing myself, and carrying on a worthwhile conversation. Even my daughters now say that the first thing I say is "How's the weather? Where's your mother?"





After leaving the CCCs, Rosowski was drafted into the army and became a paratrooper. He is shown here with his nephew Harry Vosburg in uniform.  
(Courtesy of Margi DuBois)

*[laughter] So, conversation with strangers wasn't easy for you?*

No, unless it had something to do with business or work, but just to keep a conversation going, it was not my easy thing. In fact, it was not until I became a teacher that I started to open up a little bit.

*You became a teacher when?*

After the war, I came home partly disabled, so I went to college, got a bachelor's degree in

accounting and a master's in education, and then I taught high school.

*So mostly the CCC helped you learn how to get along. Did it help you a little bit with leadership, too, since you were the truck master?*

I think it helped me, because I got promoted to sergeant in the army, and I was signed up to go to OSC, officer's training. However, I got shipped out before that. I forgot that, so I never did go any higher.

*When you look back on the CCC camp, was it primarily the roads and the drift fences that were accomplished while you were there?*

Oh, no. I think they did a lot for recreational places. Our camp was not involved in it so much, because we were a different type, but all of the other camps set up parking places and recreational areas and all that. They improved the roads and the recreation areas, built lean-to's, and made a place for camping. Certain places they made dams and ponds for trout fishing.

*Right, so there was a lot that was left behind.*

That's right. They improved quite a bit of the area, as far as the environment is concerned, I think. Some camps were even planting trees. It all depends on which area you were in. Now, I did have several occasions to drive my truck to Boise, Idaho. There was a main repair station for the Forest Service at Boise, Idaho, and I had occasion to go there several times and take some vehicles up there. They were entirely different kinds of camps than I was involved in.

*What were they like there? What was different?*



The camps were pretty much the same, except their work was more environmentally controlled.

*It sounds like the CCC Camps left us lots of things.*

Yes. They did a lot in New York City and New York State, too. There are some places that have nothing but CCC to praise for. We have a park here, called Letchworth, in which the CCC did a lot of work. It's the good old Grand Canyon of the West or New York or East or something.

*They worked on that?*

Yes. In fact, there are several buildings that I am familiar with that used to be CCC camps.

*We've been looking around here. Renee has been out trying to take pictures, but there's not a lot that's left here in Nevada.*

The one at Paradise Valley is completely demolished. I think the Ranger Station is about the only thing that's left there. I think the water tower is there, too, because it now supplies water for the town of Paradise Valley.

*You must have gone there when you came back to visit Edna Timmons?*

The one thing I didn't mention or we haven't talked about is that I didn't stay at Paradise Valley all the time. We moved the camp, I believe, two other times.

*Tell me about that.*

Are you familiar with the area of Austin?

Yes.

If you go south on Highway 50, it goes through Austin. You go south on a back road to a place called Wells Ranch. There was a CCC camp there, which we occupied for six or seven months.

Then we moved up to Elko, Nevada. We went to a place called Lamoille. The camp was mostly tents. These were the living quarters in the Ruby Valley. In fact, at the time we were there in Jiggs, Nevada, they filmed the cricket scenes for that Mormon movie. I forget what the name of it was.

*A movie about the Mormon religion?*

That's right. They filmed the cricket scenes there, and we watched them for awhile.

*Were there a lot of those crickets going through when you were there?*

Yes, there were. In fact, coming out of Elko, I believe there's a bridge there now called Emigrant Pass. You had to go up a mountain, then down in the valley, and back up again. Through that area in that one season, we put up steel sheets to divert two or three feet full of crickets into a pile, and then we poured gas on them and burned them.

*It's hard to believe there were so many, isn't it?*

Yes. I guess they come in about every seven or eight years. Then the tourists turned off and just ignored the signs of "Danger—Crickets Crossing," and when you happen to get into a big bunch, it was worse than being on ice.

*They were so slick on the roads. That still happens occasionally, I think, but probably not*

*to the extent as when you were here, though. You were in Elko and Lamoille for how long?*

Eight months. Lamoille Camp is where I left finally to come home.

*Was the work at Lamoille different than when you were at Paradise Valley?*

At Lamoille, it was either firefighting or road construction. We built a road up the mountain to a lake, which I can't remember now.

*That road is probably still there.*

Yes. I remember one of the jobs that I had was hauling dynamite.

*Why were you hauling dynamite?*

We were blasting the roads off the side of the mountain. I used to haul it from the box cars at Elko and haul it to the camp.

*You got to see quite of bit of different kinds of work going on.*

One of the things that I used to haul was hay, on the back of that big trailer that I spoke about. [laughter] Several ranger stations had horses. There was one outside of Reno I went to. There was one outside of Hawthorne, Nevada, that I used to haul hay to.

*By driving the trucks you got to kind of see a whole overview.*

Yes. What's that skiing resort up in Idaho? Sun Valley. I've been around there once or twice.

*You went back East, but I know you said you were out here about five years ago. Have you come out to visit very often?*

No. My wife is not in very good health, and she's wheelchair-bound very often.

*In past years were you able to come out?*

Yes. From the time I originally left, I didn't go back until about five years ago.

*You hadn't been back at all?*

No.

*Has it changed quite a bit?*

Yes. When I went there, the train in Elko went right straight out through the middle of the town. Now, it's outside, and the roads were very unfamiliar. I used to know my way around Elko pretty well, but I didn't know anything about anything.

*Elko has really grown, too, because of the mining. It's a big town now.*

When I was there, Las Vegas was not much.

*There wasn't much down there. Now it's huge. Did you go to Las Vegas while you were out here?*

I went there once or twice, when I was going through. There was something to do with going to the salt flats, but as to what it entailed, I have no idea. Since my memory is so vague on it, I wouldn't care to talk about it too much.

*Do you feel like you took something of Nevada back with you? Did you like it?*

The West, that's about it.

*You liked being out in the West, yes?*



Edmund and his wife Alma attended a Valentine's Day party in Elfers, Florida in 1987. After retirement, the Rosowskis remained in New York but kept a home in Florida.  
(Courtesy of Margi DuBois)

In fact, for years and years, even before we finally went there, I always mentioned to my wife that I would like to go back, but finances and all that kind of stuff didn't make it very easy to plan such a thing.

*If you've got other stories that we should include, I'd be glad to have you tell me.*

A thing we didn't mention much about was the boys. We were re-supplied with new recruits about every six months, and very often you had to teach some of the city people how to use a shovel. They didn't know actually how to throw dirt. It was unusual that somebody wouldn't know how to do it.

*When you mentioned the new recruits coming in every six months, did you ever see kids that were homesick?*

No, I don't remember anybody.

*Yes. Mostly you remember the city kids who didn't know how to do manual work?*

A lot of them didn't know. Now in all the camps, CCC's had what was known as a canteen. You could buy candy, and at that time, cigarettes, and all kinds of everything else.

[\*\*Once the tape was turned off, Ed told the interviewer that he was also at the Reese River Valley camp south of Elko. He also told of having an allergic reaction to the shot for Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and that Dr. Anderson saved his life with a shot of adrenalin into his chest. He remembered that Harold Hanson of Elko was the superintendent of his camp and a Mr. Davis represented the USFS.\*\*]



JOSEPH RUCHTY

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*Victoria Ford: It is June 22, 2000. My name is Victoria Ford, and I'm here at Joseph Ruchty's home in Reno. We're going to be talking about CCC camps. The first question I had is to ask you what life was like in your family, about the time that you went into the CCC camp. Were you living at home?*

Joseph Ruchty: No, I was living with my grandfolks, Thomas and Hattie Reddington.

*Tell me how you ended up with your grandparents.*

My mom was living in a small apartment at that time, and it was hard for her to make ends meet. I could eat like hell at that time, so my grandfather welcomed me there, and I had a room upstairs. I did things around there. Chopped wood and things like that.

*Tell me what happened to your father, that you and your mom were living alone.*

My father died. He had a heart attack.

*What year did that happen?*

Nineteen thirty-two. July 19 is when he passed on.

*How old were you then?*

I was about ten and a half.

*Did you stay with your mom for a while after he passed away?*

Yes, I stayed with my mom for awhile, and then she couldn't handle the load there. She had to move, and I moved with her. After a while I guess Grandpa and Grandma said, "Better let him come home to us. We can take care of him."

My grandpa worked as a stagehand in vaudeville shows, and he had good pay. He worked in RKO Proctors, and then years later he started in the burlesque house and stayed there until he retired. He was eighty-six when he retired.





A native of New Jersey, Joseph Ruchty came to Reno at least twice a year after 1982. This photograph was used in his memorial tribute in 2010. (Courtesy of Janice Schwarz)

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*What were you doing? Were you in high school then, when you were at your grandpa's house?*

I went to junior high school. Then I struck out to go look for work, me and another fellow named Felix Lavertano. We went looking around for work, and then I said, "We're not going to find no work."

We went down to the shore and looked in places, and nobody was hiring. The only place we found a job for a couple of days was in the stockyard in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, working with them trailers bringing the cattle down into Philadelphia. And then we came back out home. Then I went in the CC camps.

*Was the fact that you couldn't get a job about your age or about the Depression? What caused that?*

Well, the people weren't hiring anybody.

*Because it was the Depression years?*

Yes. I used to stop at Edison's factory every morning until the guy, McCoy, knew me by sight. When he'd see me coming in the door, he used to say to hit the road.

*How old were you when you decided to do the CCC camp?*

I was sixteen. You were supposed to be seventeen, but I got in when I was sixteen.

*How did you decide? How did you hear about it and decide to do that?*

We had a camp in our town.

*Tell me a little bit about how you got signed up and everything. What was that process like?*

Well, first you had to go and see the woman, Mary Nevills, the “overseer of the poor.” She wrote you up and got you in. The next time they brought the allotment in, you went down to the Newark Army. She brought you to the Newark Army, and from the Newark Army, the army took care of you.

*You actually signed up at an army camp?*

No, we signed up with Mary Nevills, the overseer of the poor. She got you in there. It wasn’t like you joined the armed forces where you had to pledge allegiance to the flag and everything. We all wanted to be with the flag anyway. [laughter]

*Yes. This was a good chance for you to have a job; is that why you were interested in this?*

It was a chance for you to meet other fellows, get along. You lived in barracks. There was about twenty-some odd guys to a barracks, I believe. You ate three times a day; they gave you your clothes, and you had to work five days out of the week.

*What were some of the first jobs that you had there?*

The first job there was up there on Lahontan Dam.

*So you worked in New Jersey for a while, but then you came out here?*

No. There was an army camp, Camp Dix. That’s where they assembled you, in that district there. Then, they put a lot of the men to where they’re going. They marched you

down to the railroad station, and you had your bags packed. This is summertime, and you had your OD’s—the winter clothes—and you were perspiring.

Then you got on the old Pullman. You had old Pullman sleepers. Two guys would sleep on the bottom; one guy slept on the top. Everybody tried to get to the top. [laughter]

*Why was the top best?*

You’re by yourself. Don’t forget now, these are coal-burner trains, so different people have different ways of figuring out things.

The mess car was in the center of the train, two of them. There were about four more cars on each side with recruits going into the camps. Now, they started with bringing the food to you. You got your old canteen cup, which was from World War I. Your mess kit was aluminum, World War I vintage, and you got that coffee. Now, you had to be careful with that hair trigger on that canteen cup, because it could wind up in your lap, and you don’t want that to happen. You got your coffee, and you set that down. Here came the prunes. By the time the next thing comes, the prunes already been eaten. Then you got your bread, and then came the apple butter. All it did was make the bread wet. Apple butter was terrible. [laughter] Then you got your eggs and potatoes, and that was it.

Now, after you finished eating, there came the kettles, the hot-water kettles, steaming-hot-water kettles. You dipped your mess kit in there? The grease was on the top, so when you pulled it back up, the grease got on it anyway. [laughter] You had to get into the washroom and do a little cleaning up with toilet paper and stuff like that to get it ready for the next meal. [laughter]

Now, you had another organization. Maybe on the way coming back they made you go to the mess trains. You walked to the train, into the mess hall. You were coming back with your food and your mess kit, and it looked like pepper was getting over everything; it was the cinders from the coal. Now you got back to your place, and you got quite a bit of cinders in your food. You couldn't win either way, but what the guys did, after each meal—they had the windows open because it was summertime—and they hit the side of your mess kit on the side of the train. When you got off that train, there was one streak of garbage all the way down.

*Where they'd been dumping it out the windows.*

Yes. On the way back, a lot of us had paper plates, so we wouldn't have to worry about that. [laughter]

*Really? OK, paper plates on the way back, so you came from Fort Dix or Camp Dix out.*

Yes.

*Tell me what your first impression was of Fallon. That's where you ended up, right?*

Yes.

*What was your first impression of Fallon?*

Well, after you've been caged up for a while, anything looks good, right? [laughter] You didn't have any money when you came into town anyway. In the beginning you stayed there until you made your first payday.

*Tell me about your camp. Where was it located in Fallon?*

By the Highway 40, I believe, right across the street from the stockyard. We used to go over to the stockyard when they had the horses in there, and we'd ride the horses. They had an old watchman in there. He'd come yelling at us, and he had a big old whip. He'd tell us, "Get off of there! Get off of the horses." [laughter]

*Were the stockyards to sell livestock?*

Yes. Sometimes they had cattle in there, steers, and other times, sheep. They had a lot of sheep out here years ago. When the winter started coming, those sheep would come across the causeway there on Lahontan Dam, and those Basque Spaniard sheepherders sure looked like wild men. Boy, their hair would be springing out, and beard all over the place.

*From being out herding the sheep?*

Oh, yes. Well, they had a big exposé here on that. One of these old Basque Spaniards that—what they call "the king of the sheep" out here in Nevada—he said how sheepherders have dwindled and that you just don't have many anymore. The reason they like their Basque Spaniards is that they knew about that and they stayed. Later on you couldn't get people to go out and take care of the sheep like they did. They *stayed* out there.

*Yes. You mentioned another group, the Native Americans or the Indians, when you got to Fallon. Tell me what was happening with them.*

The Paiutes and the Shoshone Indians had an experimental farm, and they grew a lot of fruit and vegetables. We used to go out there with our barracks bag and take cantaloupes and peaches. They had wonderful peaches,

too, and apricots. We came on back to camp with them, and after awhile the Indians got wise to us and they'd chase us.

*So you weren't buying them; you were taking them.*

Loaning them.

*Were you were stealing them?*

Yes.

*To get some fresh fruit.*

Don't use the word "steal." Use "loaning."

*You were borrowing them? [laughter]*

Right. [laughter]

*You mentioned that there were some restrictions for Indians when you were there in the 1930s.*

Well, the Indians weren't allowed to buy beer, they didn't vote, and they had to be out of town at ten o'clock. Of course, there was nothing in the town after ten o'clock anyway, but they were restricted.

*They were pretty much separate from the white people*

Yes. Today it would be very discriminatory. They had Indian CC camps, too, and my friend, Jimmie the Greek, wrestled them. He won his match against the Indians. One night the CC Indians were in town, and one of the Indians must have drunk a little beer, because he was a little "heller." This sheriff came up there and talked to him, and then he started hitting the Indian with his sap. He

had him cut on the head and everything like that. Those other Indians stood by stoically -- didn't lend a hand. You couldn't do that today. They would have made that guy eat that sap.

*How did the CCC boys in your camp feel about how the Indians were being treated?*

They thought it was a mistreatment of them. The guys in camp were just like merchant seamen: when you're picking up survivors, you treat them as good as possible. You give them clothes. It could be Japanese or anything. You picked them up out of the ocean, you treated them nice. We had a captain that shot at them in the water. Some things aren't right.

*That was one of those things that was not right. OK, so you got there, and you were in Fallon. You weren't in New Jersey anymore, and it looked pretty different than New Jersey, I bet.*

We liked it. A lot of the guys that had pimples, their faces cleared up and everything like that. The routine, the air, and everything was nice.

*Good for you?*

Some of those guys stayed in there for years. They could have been in the service, but they wasted a lot of time in the CC camp. Of course, some guys couldn't get in.

*You went in what year?*

Nineteen thirty-eight.

*You told me that you were supposed to be seventeen to get in, is that right?*

Yes, I was sixteen.

*How did you do that?*

I just told them I was seventeen.

*You just told them your age was seventeen?*

Yes. I had an Indian friend, Harry, and he got in when he was fifteen, and he didn't mind it.

It's just like one of the fellows in the navy. He was from Harlan, Kentucky. That's a very poor place, and he was making more money than he ever made in his life. He had six dependents—six children. I don't know how they ever got him in.

*Let's talk a little bit about the work that you did when you got there. You worked all week or five days a week?*

Five days a week. Then after I was there a little while, I decided to go into the galley. When you work in the kitchen department, you work two days on and two days off, which was very good.

*Tell me about the first job, though. Your first job was out working on the reservoir, is that right?*

Yes.

*Describe that to me.*

You mean about rip-rapping with the rocks?

Yes.

It was kind of hard. You just had to watch your hands so you didn't get them smashed.

*Tell me what rip-rapping means.*

It's putting the rocks down on a forty-five degree angle. You start at the bottom with the bigger rocks and boulders. This is the anchorage of your rocks. Then you work your way upward.

*How were these rocks put there?*

With the flattest side up. The dump trucks would bring them in, and they'd bring the big ones first.

They'd dump the truck and then slide down.

*Dump it down there. OK.*

Then you took the parts that you want, and you moved the others ones, but you couldn't pick them up because they were too big.

*As guys, how did you handle those rocks?*

Just back labor. That's all. We pushed them around.

*You pushed them around with several guys helping?*

Yes.

*Did you have crowbars or any kind of equipment?*

Yes, we had crowbars.

*Anything else?*

We also had shovels and sand.

*No big Caterpillars or anything to help you?*



No, nothing. We had Caterpillars, but they were for pushing other things around. We had a few Caterpillars, and they probably had two. That's about it.

*Did you think it was hard work when you were doing it?*

Not really. You always dramatize anything you do. You're going to B.S. and tell people how hard you work, but we worked hard. It was a hard day's work with the fair wages. If you're accepting the wages, you accept the work. Everybody's responsible to something.

*For the Depression, having some steady income was a good thing, right?*

The money was going home to my mother. That's the main thing.

*Was it twenty-five to her and five to you? Is that how you did it?*

Yes.

*You worked during the day, but you had some free time. What did you do with your free time?*

We'd walk into town. It was just about a mile. We walked into town and walked around. We'd go to the movies. We had the canteen or chits.

*What were the canteen chits?*

Nickel strips.

*You could use those to get into the movie?*

Yes. Except for that time we talked that grocery guy into accepting them.

*Tell that story. What did you do?*

We had a little grocery store man down there in Fallon, and he was almost on an angle away from the movie house. We walked in there, and he said, "Would you fellows like to buy something?"

We said, "All we have is canteen chits."

He said, "Well, the movie house accepts them. All right, go ahead, boys, and get what you want."

So we got what we wanted, and then we told some of the other fellows. They came in and got what they wanted. Pretty soon everybody was sort of going in the store. [laughter] About a day or two later Captain Murphy had us at retreat, and he said, "I see where a bunch of you wine suckers from New York and New Jersey talked that man into accepting them canteen chits." He said, "Well, I know who you are because the numbers are all on the chits. Don't do it no more. I had to pay up to get them chits back off of him."

Of course, later on we bought a car.

*What did he say would happen if you did it again?*

"Oh," he said, "Any of you, at any time you don't like this place, go down, and see Windy. He'll give you a new pair of shoes, and you can get your butts out of here."

*Who was Windy?*

The supply sergeant.

*Were they actually military people?*

They were reserve army men, the lieutenant and the captain. Of course, we got Tercelli out of there. He was the guy when the food inspectors came.

*Tell me about that.*

We had a retreat one night. We had an army inspector come who started questioning us about the food, and we told him that the food was terrible in this camp. He asked us what our menus looked like, and we told him.

He said, "Ever get any straight-up eggs?"

We said, "Hell, no."

"Get bacon?"

"No." I said, "We have sandwiches, a spread sandwich. The mayonnaise just gets so soggy from the heat that it's fermenting at noon time. All we do is throw it to the seagulls on the dam."

It wasn't too long after that that Tercelli was out of the camp and we got Murphy in.

*He was better?*

Captain Murphy was much better. The big man, but I forget the junior officer. I don't know if it was Decker or not, because maybe I'm mixing up Decker maybe with the Idaho camp.

*You were at the Idaho camp later then.*

Yes. I can't remember any of them from the New Jersey camp.

*Did this army inspector just come on his own?*

No. It's maybe a routine deal, or somebody might have blown the whistle on Tercelli. They were army reserve officers. Some were navy officers, too.

*You also had some local men?*

Local, employed men. They were our foremen. They directed us how to work, and they were pretty nice men.

*They knew what they were doing.*

We built a ski jump and a ski slide in Idaho.

Pop Hermann was there, and he was hell with an axe and saw. He could tell you what to do reading book. Three of us worked with a hatchery for the trout, and we made three different pens for them. It was beautiful work they did.

*You mentioned that you bought a car. Tell me the story about buying a car.*

Five of us bought it in Fallon, an old 1926 Chrysler.

*Who did you buy it from?*

An old Mexican-Indian fellow. We had to pay him in a couple of installments. [laughter]

*You didn't have enough cash on you?*

Hell, no.

*How much did you pay for it?*

Twenty-five dollars. Then we didn't have to worry about buying gas. We were stealing that from the dump trucks, siphoning it out. Again, Captain Murphy talked to us at night, a few weeks later. He said, "Well, boys, I understand a couple of you's got cars. I know damn well you're not buying gas, so I advise you to get rid of it."

We got rid of it all right.

*Could you sell it?*

Yes.

*You sold the car.*

We used to catch the freight train going to town anyway.

*From the camp into Fallon?*

That train used to go by pretty slow there, right across by where the stockyard is. We'd jump on there and ride it down to Hazen.

Then, on the main line, we'd catch another freight into either Sparks or Reno, and we'd jump off. It'd slow down in Reno, and we'd get off there.

*It stopped at Hazen and then came on into Reno?*

Yes. It was the same coming back. We'd catch a train coming back and get off at Hazen and then catch the other freight going the other way.

*You could get all the way into Reno on your days off, right?*

Yes. We went only on the weekends.

*You came in at nights, too?*

Yes. We came back at night, and we had to stand up most of the time. It was cold.

If we came in the wintertime, the cinders would be all over us. They'd get in our ears and in every other thing. It was tough riding a freight then, but a lot of those guys did it for their life. They just worked hard. Some of those railroad guys were good. They were nice to us CC guys anyway. They knew we weren't trying to break into anything—you know, rob it or anything like that. We just wanted the free transportation.

*What were the people at Fallon like? Were they nice to you guys?*

Yes.

*Did you have some problems with the locals?*

They called us a bunch of hoodlums. They had that strike. The guys said, "Do not go into town until those people apologize in the newspaper."

It was both camps. Nobody went to town. They wanted to know why, so those older guys talked to them, and they rescinded what they said. They wanted the little money that we had. [laughter]

*You talk about the older guys. Were there some people who kind of ran the camp?*

There was what we'd call a kangaroo court. These are older fellows, and some of these guys did a little time, too. When they told you something, you'd want to try to respect it, because they'd wake you up at midnight to talk to you. If you did any stealing from another person, or were just a wisenheimer, they'd put a few bruises on you.

*So that's kind of how they maintained order.*

We all benefited from it.

*They were just other enrollees like you, right?*

Yes.

*Maybe they had done some time?*

Some of them were money lenders, too.

*Oh, really?*

There were a few guys that loaned money in the camp. A dollar for a dollar and a quarter. I knew a lot of guys in organized crime years

later, and I have friends of mine who grew up together. I would never borrow money from a loan shark. My friend Frankie, that died, when he came out of there, he got arrested one time; he came out, and I loaned him money. I knew all the guys at the outfits there. Everybody was always nice. Organized crime is just like having policemen. Where they live, nobody does anything wrong. People walk around very quietly. Of course, some of the guys were noisy.

*Yes. But this was kind of what was going on in the barracks then, right?*

Yes.

*How many guys altogether in your camp?*

About 230, I guess. We had eight barracks. I guess it was about twenty-seven guys to a barrack. Then you talked about a canteen. We had a recreation hall, and that's where you could use your chits for ice cream, soda, writing paper, and candy. They had a pool hall, and they also had an education building. You'd go in there and then start to do correspondence work.

There was a Jewish fellow that slept next to me named Horowitz, and he was very studious, education-wise, you know, but he had teeth in all different angles. He kept them nice and clean and everything, but the guys used to tease him a lot. They nailed his shoes to the floor, and they tied his springs up in his bed. When he came in from the education building at night, it was dark, and he got in his bed and fell right through.

Then one time, we had an assistant leader named Plum. They moved the bunks down, and they left the spot where his bunk was. His bunk was down further, but he couldn't find his bunk. He was sort of a hillbilly-like

guy; he came from the backwoods someplace. Anyway, he went and got Decker, our second officer. Decker came and woke us all up, and we were laughing. [laughter] Then they started waking the people up that were sleeping, and they came to this one bunk. It just had pillows stuffed in it. That was Plum's bunk, and they just moved it back. He said, "You guys aren't getting out of camp for a week." [laughter]

*Did that happen? Could you get grounded for doing stuff like that?*

Yes, but nobody paid no attention. Who's going to check up on you? If you wanted to walk into town, it wasn't far. One time we went out, and we stole honey from the farmer who had some bee hives. We got the honeycombs out and then used a pillowcase to get the honey out of the combs. We only went and did that once. We would try anything once, you know.

*Get into a little mischief, right?*

Yes. We never harmed anybody; we never beat up anybody. If you wanted to fight with somebody, we did it one-on-one. It was none of this gang stuff, and they used to have fights right after supper sometime. If the guys couldn't make it with each other, right after supper they'd form a circle out there, and the guys went to work.

*They settled it that way if they had a conflict.*

Yes.

*Were there sports? Were there organized sports that you were involved in?*

Not in that camp. There were no sports. When I worked in the galley then, I became

friends with an Indian fellow, who was a baker, and I used to learn a little baking from him. When I did night watchman tricks on Saturday and Sunday, that one mess sergeant said to me, "You know, when you're a night watchman here at night, more stuff disappears out of that icebox." I had some friends who came down there. We'd cut off some beef steaks and have some eggs with it. [laughter] I did this work for nothing, just so we could eat.

*So you could get some extra food, right?*

Yes. I was always hungry.

*[laughter] Working in the galley had its benefits, too.*

Yes. Two days on and two days off.

*You had a little more time.*

This friend of mine, Maxie, did it. He was a Jewish kid from the Bronx, a tough "Hebe." He worked about six days, and then he caught the freight train and went out to Sacramento, Oakland, and 'Frisco. He took a little tour around and then came back. He had the Jewish holidays. He had the Jewish holidays and did it all just right.

*Did you stay in touch with any of the guys and make friends there?*

Yes, I went and saw Jimmie Stanus at his mother's; he lived there. He was a wonderful built Greek. Then I was on Pier 92 during the war in the navy, and I was waiting for a destroyer over in the federal shipyard in Kearney, New Jersey. I was working there, on the Camden. It was an old German cargo ship picked up in World War I—a coal burner. I volunteered to work on the coal burner to

get away from this pier, because they'd drive you crazy mustering you all the time. I was watching the guys coming down out of the prison ship to go to eat, and there was old Jimmie. I said, "Jimmie, what the hell you doing?" I was running alongside him.

He said, "Ah, I got in the navy, went over the hill to get married, and everything's working wrong." [laughter]

That's the last time I saw him again.

*About how long were you in Fallon?*

Six months.

*Did you come in the summer and leave in winter?*

Yes.

*Was the job done then on what you were working on, or did just the new group come in?*

Another group came in, but I don't think we were completely finished.

*What happened when you left Fallon then? Did you go back home?*

Well, I went back home. I went to Camp Dix. I thought I was going to get some more pay, but I got two whole silver dollars. And I said, "Oh, Whitney said that I messed up something."

I don't know what it was. That happens in life anyway. You always sign for something, and you don't know what the hell it's all about. When we got down to Newark train station, a lot of hobos were out there. It was wintertime, and they were cold. We had these old army coats, World War I coats. We threw them to the guys. I got a hold of a mackinaw in Dix and picked that up, and I threw my coat away.



*You gave it to the hobos, right?*

Yes.

*You gave your coat to the hobos, but got a new one at the camp.*

Yes, I picked up a mackinaw in Camp Dix.

*What's a mackinaw? Is it like a raincoat?*

A short one, like a three-quarter.

*Then from Camp Dix you were still in the CCC for awhile after that, right?*

No.

*You were done after you came here?*

When I came home, yes, I was done. I came home with my big trunk that I bought. That cost me \$5.50. It took me two months to pay that thing off.

*You said you'd been at another camp. You must have gone to Idaho first and then come to Fallon. Did you say you served in Idaho for awhile?*

I went to Fallon. I came back from Fallon. I re-signed up and saw old Mary Nevills again. I was sent to Dix, where they brought us down to Dix, and from there I went up to Emida, Idaho.

*Emida, Idaho. You had served some time up there, too.*

Six months there. Then I came back and was transferred from there to West Orange, New Jersey. I had spent a year out in the

camps, and they said if you do a year, you can transfer.

*Then you could be closer to home.*

Yes, I was right in my hometown.

*Then you finished out your CCC time there, right at home?*

Well, my uncle got me a job up in Albany, and if you had a job, you could quit, so I quit.

Then I went to work in the burlesque house, and after that I went in the navy. Then when I left, all the main strippers asked, "Where's the guy, Joe?"

My grandfather said, "He's gone in the navy." They all left signed pictures. He sent me a stack of pictures of those strippers.

*Yes. [laughter]*

I passed them out on the navy, and they all had them around by their bunks. [laughter]

*[laughter] That's good. What do you think was the best thing you learned about, in CCC camp?*

Taking care of yourself.

*In what way?*

Washing your clothes and being friendly. I knew when to turn around and when to go ahead. If you thought you could whip the guy, you whipped him. If you didn't, then you didn't start.

*They just really kind of learned how to get along in a group of guys like that.*

All different nationalities, all different guys. We had some good guys in our camps,

who were nice fellows to have around. Money was a big way of dividing people, and it seemed to follow us all through life. You want to quit this job to get another job to make more money, and this way you keep pushing yourself. Sometimes, if you have a good woman, you need to be pushed. Sometimes, it's not good to push, because you only get excited. You know, you have to have turmoil someplace along the line.

That's why going to sea is such an easy route, because it takes you a minute to go to work and a minute to come home from work.

*Yes, no commute, right? [laughter]*

No commuting.

*You're back in Reno now. How long have you been back in Nevada? You haven't lived here all of your life, have you?*

No, I started coming out here in 1982. I was with my girlfriend, who I lived with almost twenty-five years. She died, so one day I went to pick up my numbers, and when I came back, the guys were standing on the porch and told me that Bert had passed. I ran up there, and the policeman was there and everything.

*The two of you came out and visited, did you? Came out here?*

No, just myself.

*You came out by yourself?*

I used to come out here twice a year. I'd stay here ten days, twelve days, two weeks, and then I'd go back.

*What made you decide to move here?*

I had it in my mind anyway. I like the area, and I saw it when it was less populated, too. I said, "I'm tired." I'm just visiting these tombstones of mine. I was taking care of about seven tombstones and flowers and things like that, and Bert had told me, "Don't be spending too much time in the cemetery." Then I left.

*You came out and met your wife, Lillian.*

Yes, I feel rewarded.

*Things are going well then.*

Yes.

*Well, thank you for your help on the CCC project. I appreciate you doing this tape for us.*

All right.



## EDNA TIMMONS

[Editor's note: The first few pages of transcript are a discussion between Dan Bennett and Edna Timmons to identify her photographs of CCC days in Paradise Valley and Lamoille.]

*Dan Bennett: OK, there was Jean Timmons, who was our CCC kid in Paradise.*

Edna Timmons: Yes, and his father, Robert. He was in the army engineers. He had left the CC camp for that, and was training for it. Then there was Mrs. Keller, Lillian Hansen, Violet Biglan, and Ehlers. I think those ladies are all dead. There was Carl Worthington's wife, Ruth. We were on their ranch up there in Reese River.

*Is this part of the CCC?*

Yes, they all worked at the CCC. There was Harold Hansen, Carl's wife, my two children, Mel -- who was Harold's wife,— and Sam Worthington, Carl's brother. Then

there was Gene, Mr. Pasquale, Jake Dodd, and Charlie Keller.

*These were all foreman at Paradise?*

All at Paradise. I can't remember everybody, but there was Dan and Jack Dodd, who were in the New York group. Jack and Vivian and Violet lived in a unit. They made it, and they were sent sometimes to some of the other places and could take the trailer.

*It wasn't a railroad car.*

No, I think they built it. They designed it themselves, I think.

*Are any of these people still living?*

I don't know about Jake, but the rest of these are all dead, except for me and Jake. We picnicked up at the Boise River.

*All CCC people?*

Everyone who worked for the Forest Service or CCC. There was a campground up there. Some people worked on the road at Lamoille. They were building the road up to Lamoille Canyon.

*Is that the real scenic road in, or the one right into Lamoille?*

It's the one that takes off from the regular road and goes up the canyon. The Forest Service headquarters was on Lamoille road. There was Mr. Pasquale and Mr. Roy Harding. He was the camp superintendent. Then there was A. Torgenson, who was one of the rangers in Paradise Valley.

*Why does the name Roy Hardy sound familiar? Was he from Midas?*

Roy was related to the one that worked on the Getchell mine for a long time.

*Are any of these buildings still standing?*

Yes, they are using that office building there. That is where they interviewed us, but I think they sold the home. I don't think the ranger lived there anymore, but it is as you are going into town. CCC built a bridge up there at Lamoille. It's part of the Lamoille road.

*When your husband would move over to Lamoille from Paradise, did you go with him?*

Yes.

*You were assigned to live as a family?*

No, we made our own living quarters. We had a little trailer. We traveled after the

kids got bigger. We left Taylor when Jean was born. The schoolhouse was at Reese River.

*Is that a building that you built?*

No, I think it was done when the Forest Service headquarters were down on the coast of the reservation. They called it the little red school.

\* \* \* \* \*

*This is an interview with Edna Timmons at the request of Vikki Ford. I read some CCC questions for Edna about her husband Tim who was at the CCC camp in Paradise and a couple of other locations. We are going to go through these questions just as Vikki has them laid out, and we will see what happens. Your husband's name was Wilbur V. Timmons. What did the V. stand for?*

Valentine.

*We may ask Vikki to hold on to that. Were you married to him at the time he worked for the CCC?*

Yes.

*Did you have children?*

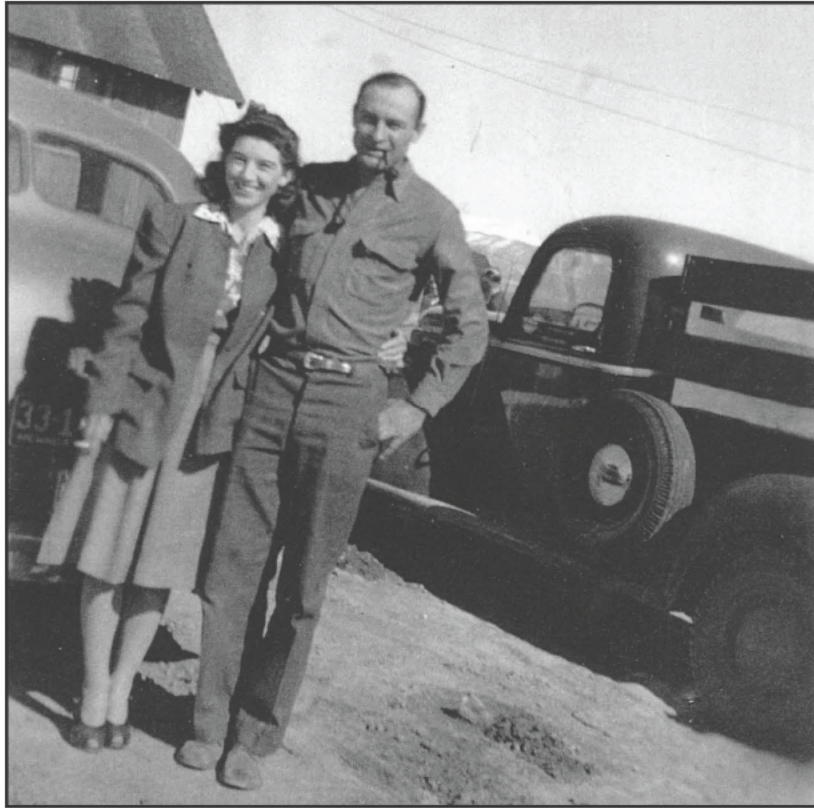
Two.

*Do you remember how he learned about the CCC job?*

We were well-acquainted with some of the Forest Service people in Elko. At the time he was working for Taylor, the rancher.

*He was working for John G. Taylor at the time?*





This photograph of Edna and husband Tim, a foreman at Camp Paradise CCC Camp, was taken around 1939. (Courtesy of Edna Timmons)

Yes. We both were. It was when I had Jean that they claimed him, and he applied for it there in Elko. They put him to work almost the next day.

*What year would that be?*

1935.

*Was that about the time that John G. Taylor was starting to lose his battle?*

Yes.

*What job did he do for CCC?*

He was shop foreman, a mechanic.

*What was the main work performed by the boys at his particular camp?*

They did mostly road work and fighting fires. They worked on Martin Creek Dam. They built the road over Hinkey Summit.

*What CCC camp did he work at?*

He was at Paradise, Lamoille, and Reese River.

*Do you know where they were located? Did you live there, or did he commute?*

We lived in Paradise Valley and in Lamoille.

*Reese River?*

Reese River, we had our trailer. When the boys started school, we rented a house there. Then he commuted mostly from Ione up to the CCC camp up at Reese River, when we were in Reese River. That was about the only commuting he ever did with them.

*Who was in charge of the camp? The USFS—Forest Service—the BLM, UNR?*

The USFS and the army. They were there with all these army personnel.

*Was he actually an employee of the army in these CCC camps?*

No. He was in the Forest Service.

*What was he paid for the work he did?*

If I can remember, it started out at one hundred and forty dollars a month.

*Did it go up from there?*

Yes, but not too much. It was close to two hundred when he quit.

*Ed Rosowski remembers you and your husband and said that he visited you five years ago. Did you make friends with other boys and employees at the camp?*

Oh, yes. I can't think of their names. I knew almost all of them that worked in the shop anyway. Then, they were very active up in Paradise, in the local dances and things. We knew a lot of them, but I can't remember a lot of their names. There would be no reason to if I never heard from them again, but Ed stayed

with us. He kept track from the time that he left for the service until today.

*What did your husband and others think of the CCC camp?*

The CCC boys themselves thought that it was great. They get three meals a day and thirty dollars a month. I never heard one ever complain, other than sometimes about the meals. They always complained about that, though.

*What did the local people think of the CCC camp and its projects in Nevada?*

I think they were very accepting.

*Did the CCC have good rapport with the city folk?*

Yes. Some of the local girls married some of the boys.

*How long did your husband work at the CCC camp?*

Altogether he worked about eight and a half or nine years with the Forest Service. When the camp closed, they sent him to the shop in Boise, and we were there for a few months. Then the boys were gone. He went to work for the shipyards in California, but that was our end of the CC's, so they had disbanded by then.

*Why were they disbanded?*

The war.

*The war was coming on. I suppose the boys were drafted.*

They enlisted and drafted.

*Did Tim enlist?*

Yes. He went into the army.

*Is there anything else that you can tell us about the CCC camp or what happened there—that you would want to see in print? [laughing]*

Now, that's a good question. I don't know of anything. I don't remember any of the disturbances. One boy was caught when they were building and paving the road to Paradise. One of the boys stole a lot of tires from the Dodge Construction in Fallon. Ed went with the constable up over Hickey Summit, and they found him and got him.

*Your dad did that? When he was the sheriff?*

No, my uncle's cousin was the constable there. Ed was never over in Paradise; he may have visited there, but he was constable here.

*When Tim signed up for the CCC, were you living in Paradise at that time?*

No, we were at Columbia. That's by Spruce Springs, Columbia—with the sheep out there. Then he went to work for the Forest Service.

*Is there anything else that you would like to see made a part of history, as part of the CCC story.*

I think they were very important to the young people of Nevada—put them to work and gave them a penny to spend.



U.S. Forest Service officials and camp foremen pose for a group photograph behind the Paradise Ranger Station. Edna's husband Tim is second from the right. The Paradise CCC camp was across the street from this location. (Courtesy of Edna Timmons)



*It gave them the dignity that they needed for those times.*

That's right. They didn't have anything. The group that came from New York,—before they left—they talked like human beings. When they arrived, it was just a lot of gibberish. It was just like letting out a herd of monkeys.

*What was the discipline like in there on the boys? Were they tough on them? Was it like an army?*

They had their officers that had to maintain the order in the camps.

*As a foreman, did Tim have to worry about that, or was there someone else that handled the discipline problems?*

There was somebody else that handled that, but we had a lot to do with the boys that worked for him.

*Did a lot of the boys stay in the area, after it ended?*

Yes. A lot of them went back to their hometowns. There was the one camp full of boys from Kansas, and they went back. A lot of the boys from New York never went back, though; they stayed in Nevada and Idaho. They liked the West.

*Were there any projects in the Midas area for CCC?*

Not that I remember anything. I don't think there was anything over here. They used to visit these places. They used to get a team of horses from my uncle or my cousin, there on the ranch in Paradise, and travel

around and see some of the things that they read about or heard about. They didn't have cars.

*When they were stationed out in places like Paradise, was Winnemucca then the hot spot to go to on Saturday night?*

Yes. They went there for their movies, and they never missed a dance in Paradise.

*Did they have a lot of that going on?*

Yes, there would be ten girls for forty boys.

*That was the fun of it. [laughing]*

That was the fun of it. They never missed a dance. They didn't care whether you were married or ten years old. If you wanted to dance, they liked to dance.

*Did Tim speak of it afterwards, often? Was he proud of the fact that he was in CCC?*

Yes, we enjoyed the years with the Forest Service and the camps.

The boys were killed on his shift. They were burned to death in that Forest Fire.

*Did that take place in Paradise?*

It happened right over the hill in Knot Creek, but he had taken the crew up that afternoon. That fire went into the night. The fire got away, and winds felt like a hundred miles an hour. Lederman took one group of boys, and Tim took the other group. They split on the fire to go up the canyon, and up in Knot Creek. Five of those boys didn't make it out. They got caught in the fire and panicked. They were trying to stay in the pivot. Instead of staying in the ditch that they were in, they

tried to climb out of it; some of them got out, and some didn't. That was the most terrible thing that happened in our years there.

*Did that play on Tim pretty heavy?*

Yes. That was real bad. He was on trial for it.

*There was a trial?*

There was a trial, too.

*How did that turn out? What came of it? Did you have more like a hearing?*

Yes, it was more like a hearing.

*They wanted to figure out if there was fault or negligence?*

Yes, but it turned out fine. I've got all the newspaper clippings.

Also, I remember another accident. I think one of the boys—not one that I knew—was hiking up on the Hinkey Summit and fell when he was climbing over those big cliffs.

*He was off duty?*

Yes, he was off duty, hiking. They've got a big cross up there. They used to have it at Hinkey under that rock. Someday I will get those copies out, and let you look at them—copies of the different testifying and such.

*Vikki may have an interest in that, or this may put her on to it. Do you recall the year or the newspaper that covered it?*

The *Humboldt Sun* did. There is a memorial out on the road, too. McDermott. A big place out there that was in their memories.

*When you are driving that road, can you see the CCC camp, or do you have to go into the Paradise Road?*

No. The camp is gone; they moved it. Literally they picked it up piece by piece. All you could see now is the rock work—what was done with the wells.

*Why don't you tell about when you and Tim went over to Paradise to take part in the CCC? Perhaps Vikki isn't aware of that and could get some more information from those records. When was that? Who sponsored it?*

It seems to me like it was Vikki Ford that came over here or that let us know and called us. It was some gal from the BLM at Winnemucca or the Forest Service.

*She was trying to get people together.*

Yes, I have a picture of Tim and me out there in front of the Forest Service building, too. I didn't even get that one. I'm sure that they know about it, because they talked to us on the phone a couple of times, and we went over there and spent the afternoon. They were supposed to have had a get-together, an open house type thing, and nobody showed up but Tim and me.

*Did the time that these guys like Tim spent in the CCC, count toward Forest Service retirement?*

Yes. It would have counted for eight years after he got out of the service. They went back and found his records and paid him so much every month.

*When he got out of the service, where were you?*



I was in Winnemucca.

*What did he do there?*

He went to work for the Buick garage there, for a short time. I was working at JC Penney's. Then we went to Paradise, started a restaurant and a shop. He had the shop, and I had the restaurant. We had that for three years, and then he bought into a ranch for about a year with a cousin of mine.

*When Tim was with the CCC, did the kids have friends that they had stayed in touch with, or was it a close community that way?*

It was, because Jean graduated from Paradise grammar school. They both went to school there, and Arloa left around 1950. We had been in Paradise off and on in those years, but he had the Chevrolet garage in Winnemucca—for Backus—for several years until Backus retired. He worked for \_???\_ Brothers as their mechanic. He followed that pretty much.

*I'd always heard that Tim was one heck of a mechanic.*

Yes. Everybody knew that he was that.  
[laughter]



The wives of the CCC foremen at Camp Paradise not only supported their husbands but provided friendship and moral support to many homesick enrollees. Edna Timmons is on the right. (Courtesy of Edna Timmons)

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VERNARD “BUD” HENRY WILBUR

*Victoria Ford: Today is July 19, 2000. My name is Vikki Ford, and we are doing a taped phone interview with Bud Wilbur in San Diego about Nevada's CCC Camps. Bud, tell me when and where you were born.*

Vernard “Bud” Wilbur: I was born on October 11, 1919, in Binghamton, New York; that's up in the mountainous area of New York State.

*Tell me what was happening about the time you joined the CCC. How old were you?*

I was eighteen. I had been in school. I started school when I was six years old and had been going through like most of the kids in the Depression at that time. I was one of seven siblings, and my father was making twenty dollars a week.

*What was his work?*

My father worked in a lumber mill, and twenty dollars didn't go very far.

*Not for seven kids.*

Yes. [laughter] Of course, the southern Conservation Corp had been in being for about four years, five years at that time. It was a very popular program.

*This was 1937, wasn't it?*

It started in 1933. A lot of my friends and a lot of my buddies were dropping out of school to make another place at the table for the rest of the kids.

*Is that what you ended up doing then, too?*

Yes. Exactly. I quit school my senior year and joined in one of two state park camps, which was about ten miles from Binghamton. We worked on a county golf course up there doing odds and ends and planting pine trees, seedlings along the roughs on the fairway. Then they posted a notice on the bulletin board saying that they were acquiring people for a cadre to go down to Ft. Dix, New Jersey,



Vernard “Bud” Wilbur and his wife Marion were avid supporters of the CCC Legacy, California Conservation Corps and the Urban Corps of San Diego. Helping at-risk youth stay in school and out of trouble became their life’s work. Their visions grew out of Bud’s CCC experience in Hawthorne, Nevada and his 24 years in the Army Air Corps.  
(Courtesy of Urban Corps of San Diego)

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and become part of a company and go—and the terminology was then, “go out West”—so I volunteered.

*What made you decide you would like to try that?*

I guess I had a lot of gypsy in my soul, and one of my other friends had gone and come back home that I had known. He was a couple years older than me, and they had a lot of fun.

*So you took off for Ft. Dix. Tell me what happened from there.*

At Ft. Dix there, there’s about twenty of us, which was the nucleus of the company, and we were assigned a Company 3273 out of New York City. There were Jewish kids, Italian kids, Irish kids, and probably the best mix of nationalities that you could find. They just assembled us there at Ft. Dix—Camp Dix, New Jersey—at that time. They put us on a troop train, and they put in a car where they had a kitchen set up. They assigned us sort of a sub-Pullman type, and they started us on our way. It took us eight days to go from Camp Dix to Hawthorne, Nevada.

*I want to ask you a little bit more about Ft. Dix. Did you already have all your clothing and so on that you needed from your work before?*

Yes.

*You were just really gathering at Camp Dix?*

That's all, yes.

*Then you got on to the train, and you had an eight day trip. What was that like?*

For most there who had never been outside of the city since we were born, a lot of amazement and wonderment of the things that we saw. We left Camp Dix and went to Chicago first, and they put us on a siding, until all the rest of the trains got by. Then they hooked us back up again and gave us another name, and I think at that time we were being pulled by the Denver Rio Grande Western, out of Chicago.

Of course, we went to the great plains of Kansas and Colorado, and we went through the big gorge in Colorado there, that winds away through all of its beauty into Utah, into the flat desert country. From Utah we cut back through to Reno.

*Oh, you came to Reno first?*

It was a beautiful sight to see—you know, nature and all of its beauty. It was sort of unmarred. Man hadn't messed with it too much, and there was a lot that you could see and wonder about.

*Sounds like a wonderful sight-seeing trip.*

It was indeed.

*So you came to Reno, then, before you went to Hawthorne? Is that correct?*

That's correct.

*Did you stay at Reno for any length of time?*

No, not at that time. We just switched trains, and they pulled us down to Hawthorne, Nevada, and that's where we unloaded and were trucked up into the camp.

*Now where was the camp located in relation to Hawthorne, the town?*

Probably about four miles as a crow flies. It was right at the base of Mt. Grant, and one of the big things up there that you'd never seen in the eastern part of the country was the big H they had up on the mountainside.

*They didn't have those big letters on the mountains out East?*

Oh, no, not that I can remember.

*So you saw the big H, was the camp near that?*

No. That was probably at about 4500-5000 feet up on the mountain.

*You were at the base of the mountain.*

Probably at sea level, at the base of the mountain, maybe a mile away from the very, very base; and Hawthorne was probably three or four miles below us, right in the center of the valley.

*How big of a camp was that?*

Most camps, to the best of my recognition, housed about 220 men.

*Was the camp already built and running when you arrived?*

Yes. They were all wooden and tarpaper construction, and they weren't pretty at all. They were just put up in a hurry, and the insides were raw with the 2x4's sticking out, if you will. Unpainted. There we had the old G.I. army bunk in there.

*Were they barracks-style?*

Yes. This was very much military.

*Very military?*

It was a very disciplined effort that the Civilian Conservation Corp was going through. We were governed by the military, and we had a commanding officer, an adjutant, a doctor, a first sergeant, and a company clerk—all military.

*Do you remember the names of those people by any chance?*

The commanding officer's name was a Captain Albert Letterman. He was from New York City and was a captain in the reserve. There was a second lieutenant, Arthur Gottlieb. Reserve.

*He was a first lieutenant?*

Captain Pearce was a combination active duty and reserve officer, and he came from Mare Island in California. That's where his home was, and we had a first sergeant by the name of Brodie. He was about as Irish as Paddy's pig and as mean and as ugly.

*[laughter] He was a tough guy?*

Yes, he was. Well, you had to be, there especially, when you came in confrontation

with some of those kids that lived off the streets of New York City for all of their lives.

*Were there some problems with discipline there?*

Not many. I'll get to that in just a minute.... Our company clerk's name was Jim McQuaid.

*Before we talk about discipline, let's talk a little bit about the work that you did there.*

I'll start from bright and early in the morning. We stood reveille in the morning. Everybody fell out, fell up in a company type formation, stood attention, and they put the flag up. You were dismissed at that time to go back and make your bed and your barracks, and get on to the mess hall and eat. They fed you very well.

*What kind of food did you have for breakfast, for example?*

Oh golly, they had almost anything you call for. It was varied, and it was good. You go from pancakes to French toast to always a type of cereal, either dry or cooked. Chipped beef on toast was very popular as well as fried potatoes, fried ham, and fried salt pork.

*Did you have eggs and fresh dairy products?*

Oh, yes. They had two big griddles there, right there in the serving line, and when they served eggs they would cook them the way you wanted them. That was mainly for breakfast. The rest of the meals for lunch and dinner or supper when you were in camp were family-style. You walked into the mess hall and sat down at the table, and there were eight people to a table. Your plates and knives



and forks were already set there, and you had different types of bowls for gravy, potatoes, vegetables, and so forth. As soon as the table was seated, two or three of the boys would get up and go up to the cooks on line, and he would fill those bowls up with whatever you're going to have for dinner that night.

They'd go back to the table and start the process of filling your plate up. There was an unwritten rule: if you were the last person that finished and emptied a bowl, you stopped eating, went up, refilled it, and brought it back to the table. If you didn't, it was too bad for you when they got you outside.

*[laughter]*

It was an unwritten rule, but it was about courtesy. That's the way it was, and don't break it.

*So you learned some manners and respect for others at that point?*

Absolutely. You were all in the same boat together, and you can either pull together and make it easy or be disruptive and take your penalties.

*A lot of teamwork?*

Yes, it was extremely important, and I think that's what the army had in mind when they put us in barracks, with the military-style "yes, sir and no, sir," "left and right," shoes polished, clothes hung and buttoned the same way. You treat your fellow man the same way, because you never know what your next day of work is going to be, and you had to pull together as a team. Quite often, if there was any difference in what was going on at that time about your pulling your own weight,

especially in a forest fire or a range fire, you could be in deep trouble in short order.

*Did you ever get called to help with fire fighting?*

Yes, on one occasion the whole company was pulled out, and we went up. I think this was about this time of year in Winnemucca. There was a big range fire up there, and to the best of my knowledge, we spent about three days up there fighting it. There were other companies throughout the state, up there at the same time, doing it.

*So they pulled a lot of the CCC guys in?*

Yes.

*All right. Let's go back to your daily schedule. After breakfast, what happened then?*

After breakfast we made the final inspection by the sergeant in charge of the barracks. Every barracks had either a leader or an assistant leader. A leader was a sergeant, and an assistant leader was a corporal. You passed your barracks inspection and fell out, and at that time we were turned over to the camp superintendent. Our camp superintendent, of course, worked directly for the Division of Grazing, which came under the Department of Agriculture, and he had, what they called, Local Experienced Men (LEM). These were men that were qualified to teach us and lead us in the type of work that we were going to do.

*What was your work?*

Well, as I say, we graded roads. They would take us out with two graders in camp and a couple of DC3 caterpillar tractors, and

they would assign you to a truck and to a foreman, and that truck and that foreman with probably ten or fifteen men. Sometimes you might be assigned to stringing barbed wire or tightening barbed wire up. Whatever they had, whatever the need was for the day.

*You graded roads and worked on barbed wire. What other kind of work did you do? This was mostly to help with the range lands?*

Yes, indeed. Well, we dug out a big reservoir about a mile above the camp and firmed it all up with rocks and so forth. Then it was filled so that the stockmen could use it.

*What was that used for?*

For drinking water for cattle.

*Oh, a reservoir for water?*

Yes.

*Earlier you said something about a cattle dip, also?*

Yes, they were probably five or six feet wide and maybe ten or fifteen yards long, and we dug them out and lined them up with different types of rock material in it. They would fill it up with water and put a disinfectant in it, and run the cattle through there to kill ticks.

*Ticks?*

Rocky Mountain spotted fever tick was quite predominant at that time in the West. In fact, the enrollee was inoculated, and for that particular type of shot you had to take it in the stomach.

*That doesn't sound too good.*

No, it wasn't, but that's the way it was.

*About how large was the reservoir for water?*

It might have been a hundred yards square.

*You were away from Walker Lake, though, right?*

Yes. Walker Lake was west of Hawthorne, and, in fact, it's probably about midway between Hawthorne and Schurz.

We used to go down there, and we never did any work on the lake itself, per se. We used it for recreational periods, like the Department of the Navy and the Marine Guards down at the Naval Base used to do.

*I was thinking in terms of water, since you were so far away from Walker Lake; a reservoir for water for the cattle would have been important.*

Oh, it definitely was because the saline content of Walker Lake is totally unacceptable.

*It's not acceptable for stock anyway?*

Oh, no. It's highly salted.

*So you graded roads, you worked on these reservoirs for both cattle dip and for water, stringing barbed wire. Was there anything else that you recall doing?*

Oh, yes. Quite often we would go out on a range and attempt to grade it out and level it out, take away unwanted cactus that was there, that the cattle used to feed on, which was not good for them. I thought that we were

kept busy doing that. We covered a lot of area around Hawthorne, probably anywhere out to thirty or forty miles out into the desert.

*Did you think this was hard work for city kids?*

They were with their foreman and scattered to the four winds, and you'd see them back at the base about 4:30 in the evening.

*Did you find this work to be hard work since you came from a city and weren't used to this type of work?*

Oh, you bet. [laughter] You worked eight hours a day, and they fed you well. Normally on your daily trips out into the desert, you would take a lunch bag with you, and it was normally made with two sandwiches and a piece of fruit. Each crew would always carry their own water bag—they called it a Lister bag—and salt tablets. The foreman made sure you drank plenty of water and took plenty of salt tablets. That was just the way of life out there.

*Did you have to learn things about desert survival, about rattlesnakes and that type of thing, also?*

Yes, indeed. In fact, the foreman that I remember the best was Mr. Ashbaugh. He was a young man about twenty-five years old and recently married, and I think they had one child. He was a graduate of Colorado A & M, and he used to tell us the stories about him going to college and what he had learned on the range from being in Colorado. There being no work in Colorado at the time, they migrated down to the Department of Agriculture in Nevada, and that's how he came

to hook up with Mr. Pine and Mr. Murphy, who were the camp superintendents.

*I see. Working in the heat was a problem and just working out in the desert was hard work for these kids.*

Yes. Most of it was pick and shovel type work. A lot of it was pole-type work, especially on the barbed wire, and hammering with staples. If you will, using the terminology of the Marine Corps, it was "grunt-type labor."

*All hand work.*

Yes, most of it. There was not much room for imagination there. They were all simple tasks. You explained them to a person, and the average person could go ahead and carry them out. It was good. The average enrollee put on about forty pounds in six months.

*Really?*

Yes. They fed exceptionally well.

*That was a time when being fed well was really appreciated, with the Depression, correct?*

Yes.

*Were you sending money back to your family at home?*

Well, as you are probably aware of, we were paid thirty dollars a month, and that was standard for the enrollee. That's if you had no rank at all whatsoever. Twenty-five of that thirty dollars was sent home to your mother and dad in the form of a treasury check. You never saw it. That was by law. If you were a single man with no family, you

had to open a bank account somewhere, and the government would deposit money into that account for you. They would never pay you that full amount totally. We were left with five dollars a month to go to the picture movies and to buy our cokes and candies and cigarettes and so forth, but it would last you for quite awhile.

*That was one of the things I was going to ask you next—what kind of things you did for fun.*

Well, Hawthorne had a movie, and quite often on Saturdays, we would go down and see the Saturday evening flick. Other than that, at times—our educational advisor was an 8mm camera enthusiast—the military would send out either pictures and training films and so forth, and he would show them at the educational center at night. We had that to look at.

*So there was an education center. Did you use that education center?*

Oh, yes. In fact, the gentlemen's name was Mr. Pope, and he was from the Sacramento area. He went through all the records of the enrollees, and he noticed that I dropped out of school during my senior year. He had the authority of talking with the captain to make changes and recommendations, and I think there were about four or five other of us young men in there at camp. We were given the opportunity to go to Hawthorne and go to their high school with the local kids, and I did. We went to school eight hours a day, and I finished and got my high school equivalency diploma from the State of New York that way.

After we went to school, we would come home at night. I was assigned to a task of making sure that the oil barrels were full,

for heat in the barracks. I was sort of a night watchman, and we were to scare off the coyotes, because they would go through the garbage cans out there by the mess hall. Also, we would help the cook and bakers in the kitchen at night.

*You went to school in the day and worked at night?*

I got about five or six hours of sleep, went to school the next day, and started it all over again, but it was good. It was interesting, and we got to know the people in town, and the kids our same age. They were all nice, fine families.

*What was your reception by the town's people? Were you welcomed?*

Yes. By the time we had been there at the CCC camp at Hawthorne, it had been around for about three and a half years at that time, so they were accustomed to us. Although no one ever told me of any bad instances that happened, on occasion they were saying, "Well, don't do this, or don't talk to this girl or this boy," and, you know, "it's just not worth it and the father is very adamant about it." We would leave those kids alone, but other than that, we never had a problem. We drank sodas in their drug stores and went to their movies and went to their dances and just enjoyed ourselves. We were told, "You have to behave yourselves. You are not an animal," and we got along very well.

*How often did they have dances?*

Probably once a month.

*Did you have live bands or records?*

Both. It was mainly a jukebox at the time. You know, the Wurlitzer-type record player?

*Sure.*

On Saturday evenings, if you had passed your Saturday morning inspection of your barracks, you always got a pass for the weekend for Saturday night and Sunday afternoon and Sunday night.

*You could go downtown then?*

Yes, and if you didn't, you had to stay in camp and take your punishment.

*I see. [laughter] What was the most important thing that you learned during your time at the CCC Camp?*

Team work, respect for one another. Sometimes, a lot of young people today have this problem: they talk when they should be listening. I learned early on there that if you wanted to learn something and get ahead, and, if the foreman or the captain was speaking, you kept your mouth shut, listened to what he said, and put it into effect.

There were so many people at that time that would argue with it or fight against it. HHHis mind is going a different direction every time someone is attempting to teach something. That's followed through very well for many of us that went into the military when we left.

In fact, as a side note, when I joined the Army Air Corp in 1941 and went into my basic training, most of the commanding officers would ask people at that time, "Were you ever in the Civilian Conservation Corps, and how long were in, and what was your discipline like?" Normally those men were

given a better job and had a better chance for a promotion to private first class, over and above the average enrollee at that time.

*So, it really helped you when you went into the service.*

Yes, indeed.

*It seems like, as I talked to people, that there were differences in the discipline at the various camps. It sounds like you were in a fairly strict, disciplined camp. With some others I've talked to, there was discipline, but it was a little bit looser.*

Well, I'll give you a couple of instances. Most camps, to the best of my knowledge, always had a boxing ring. As you're probably aware, the Golden Gloves Program was very popular in the United States at the time. Are you familiar with that?

*No, I'm not.*

Most large towns had what they call the Boys Club and Girls Club. You've heard of them?

*Yes, I have.*

Anyway, they started with teaching youngsters how to box, and they taught the girls how to cook as well as different little odds and things like that. The main idea was self-defense at that time.

Boxing was very, very prominent in the United States and throughout the world. You're talking about men like Max Baer and Gene Tuney and Jack Johnson and Joe Lewis and Graziano and all those big-time boxers that make boxing what it is today.



In any event, they were very competitive. Regions put their lightweight, heavyweight, and middleweight boxers in competition with other states and districts, and it even got into military. They always had an event at the end of the year where the champions of all the groups met and decided for one local champion. Most camps had a boxing ring, and the commanding officer had a pair of boxing gloves. He kept his finger on the pulse of the camp, and if there were people who were having problems with one another, he would get them both together, put them in the boxing ring, put the gloves on and say, "Let her go."

That took care of a lot of the animosity, and again, if there were real belligerent types... we had a couple in our camp. The first sergeant was an excellent boxer who would take them on and get their attention real quick.

*So they'd have to fight him if they were really out of line?*

Yes. Other types of discipline—something called a Kangaroo Court.

*Oh, really?*

It was a court of your peers, if you will. A good example is, if you were out doing a particular job, and this guy was laying down on the side of the road -- didn't want to work, wasn't carrying his part of the load, and bad mouthing everyone that come along—the Local Experience Man (LEM) or the leader there of the group at that time, would report to the company superintendent. It would get back to the old man, and he would say, "Well, you hold a Kangaroo Court and take actions."

That was pretty rough, because he was being disciplined by the men that he worked

with. You either followed through, and the old man followed through with it, or in many cases, they went over the hill and went home.

*If the kids couldn't handle it, they would just go AWOL [absent without leave], basically?*

Exactly.

*Did you have a couple that did that?*

Yes. In fact, most every CCC Camp had people that just weren't fit for it. It was not ready for them, and they weren't ready either, so they went home.

*It was similar to the military. Some kids don't make it through basic training.*

That's correct. Back in the 1930s there, to the best of my knowledge, you took a bath or a shower once a week, and that was the Saturday night bath that your mother administered. In any event, we had the big shower rooms, and most of the men took their showers daily. That'd be when they got through working, because they were tough and sweaty, but then again, there were those kids that never would; after awhile, they got pretty ripe.

We reported to the first sergeant and the old man. I remember, in our camp particularly, we had this one guy who wouldn't shower, so the first sergeant said, "Four or five of you guys get this young person and take him into the shower and give him a shower."

At the time, we had these eight-inch, heavy bristle brushes, about two inches long. The brush itself was probably eight inches by three inches, and we were issued lye soap -- that's what we used to take our showers with. He said, "You take this guy in here, take a

couple of those brushes and the soap, and give him a bath. I'll guarantee he'll take his bath every Saturday night like he is supposed to."

*[laughter] Did it work?*

Yes. *[laughter]* It was very demeaning, and your body was just about as red as it could be when you got through with a half a dozen guys scrubbing on it with those brushes.

*From your work and so on, what did the CCC boys leave for Nevada? You've already mentioned the reservoir, for example.*

I just think all the miles of ranges, with the graded roads. Those roads allowed the ranchers access to get to places where they were never able to get into before, and it would open up various mountain ranges for high summer feeding when there was nothing down in the valley. Also, we made all the cattle guards that they put across the roads. They're still there today—still being used today.

*Oh, good point. That's when those went in? There were no cattle guards when you folks started?*

Not that I remember.

*That's a big thing in Nevada. Everywhere you go, you run across those.*

Yes, indeed. Also, we did all the fencing. At one time the range wasn't fenced at all, and I'm sure that in your lifetime, you read about these range wars that different cattlemen had with one another because of range land being fenced.

*So the fencing really started then, in the 1930s?*

I'm not sure actually when it started, but I knew it kept things on an even basis, for herd to herd and owner to owner. That's about the biggest thing that I think that we left, as far as Hawthorne was concerned.

*How long were you at Hawthorne now?*

About sixteen months.

*Overall, what impact did that time at Hawthorne have on you?*

I think western people are some of the finest people in the world. They are about as down-to-earth as you can get. They're extremely honest and hard-working people. Like anywhere else, you meet every day those that are educated and those that are ignorant, and you take them as they are.

*Yes. You mentioned that learning the skills that you did at the CCC camp were really important to you also in the military.*

Oh, yes. When I went in the military, I didn't have a problem with the regimentation—of making your bed and making it right, reveille, retreat, taps, any of these formations. You learn the bugle calls. In fact, that's the way that they announced them. Every camp had a bugler. They had a little tin horn that they put a bugle in the end of it. They blew it in four different directions, and you could hear it for quite a ways. You knew what the calls were and acted accordingly. Incidentally, we had to go through the naval base to get to our camp.

*In Hawthorne?*

Yes.

*You had to drive through there?*

Yes, with the military trucks, and it was guarded by the United States Marines. At that time, that was a beautiful base. It was painted nice and white. Of course, the GI's were sharp, and very memorable, and envious to most of the men who went through there. That was an ammunition dump at that time, and I think it still is.

*Seeing that beautiful base and admiring this, did that influence you to have your career in the military?*

Absolutely. I wanted to be one of them.

*You served how many years in the military?*

Twenty-four years.

*I'd like you also to talk a little bit about how you started out with CCC camps but have done a lot in terms of the history of CCC camps in recent years.*

When I finished my tour in 1939, I got a telegram from mother that my father had a massive heart attack. I went home, and I took his place in his mill until he died. He died in 1940. About that time the draft was coming up, and people were being inducted and so forth. I talked my mother into allowing me to enlist, so I did.

It must have been the twenty-third of April of 1941, and I went to Syler, Georgia, for my assignment, and from there I was sent to Ft. Benning, Georgia, for basic training. In Ft. Benning, Georgia, at that time, they had the 82nd and the 101st Air Borne, which is still popular today, and it was still popular during World War II. Anyway, I stayed in

the air force. I was shipped out of Savanna to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. There's a big bombing and gunnery range that they were setting up for practice for the pilots and the crews, and we stayed up there for a couple years. I just wanted to get out, and I wanted to get somewhere else.

In the meantime, I had my wife. I had married Marion, and she was home and doing her thing for the war effort. I went to gunners' school at Ft. Meyers, Florida, and was assigned to a combat group for training. I did that, and by the time we got overseas, everything was over and done with, so we stayed there and went into the army of occupation for three years. I brought Marion and the family over there, and we came home in 1949 and went to Castle Air Force Base up at Merced, flying B-29s.

Then, when that base closed down, they changed airplanes. I went to Randolph Air Force Base and was a gunnery instructor flying B-29s there, and then NATO had a call to get all the gunners out of the different odd jobs, so we went to school at Lowry Air Force Base for six months on the B-45, which was a jet bomber at that time, and we ended up in England again as a NATO group, so we spent three years there in England. Then we came back and were assigned to the 310th Bomb Group in Salinas, Kansas, and that was a B-47 Bomb Wing. I spent four and a half years there, and re-enlisted, and sent out to Travis Air Force Base. Travis is out of San Francisco about forty miles. I spent three years there, and got my last stripe, and decided to retire.

The day I retired, which was on the thirty-first of August, 1964, my son was graduating the following day from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. We drove all that night, got down here the following day, and

were able to see him graduate before he was sent off. Then he went into navigator training, and he put two tours in Vietnam and came back to Hawaii. In the interim, while he was in the Marine Corp doing his thing, I went to work at the Naval Air Station, North Island, in the Department of Navy, and fixed and overhauled navy jets and aircraft.

*You said Naval Air Station, where was that?*

At Coronado, North Island.

*I know you spent quite awhile in the military between air force and the naval work that you did, but since I'm just focused on the CCC, when did you get back into CCC work?*

We'd been reading in the paper that Governor Jerry Brown and someone here had started the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corp Alumni that had come together up in Sacramento in 1981 and was forming a major unit. They were headquartered back in Maryland at that time, with chapters all over the country. Unbeknownst to us, this gentleman down here started a chapter, and we read about a dedication being held in Balboa Park, so Marion and I went over there, joined the chapter, and became extremely active in it. I became president of it. In fact, I was president of it for darn near fifteen or sixteen years.

We championed the causes of the old Civilian Conservation Corps. Balboa Park, at one time, had a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in it, during an exposition in 1935 and 1936. We kept it going, and we were getting our assignments from our headquarters back in Maryland at that time. The California Conservation Corp was just put into being by Jerry Brown at that time, and a man by the

name of B.T. Collins. He was quite a man. He was a lieutenant that was wounded in combat in Vietnam. He lost an arm and a leg. He applied for and got the position of director of the California Conservation Corps.

*Was this an active conservation corps, not an alumni group?*

Not an alumni group. It was one for the state of California. B.T. Collins coined a phrased, "Hard work, low pay, and miserable conditions."

That's, indeed, what it was. If you could hack it out, you could stay; if you couldn't, you could go home and cry to momma. He went on to become an assemblyman and a congressman. He was a giant in the California Conservation Corps, which is now coming up on twenty-five years of age.

Anyway, we used to go around with the California Conservation Corps, especially in San Diego, on the old camp sites. We would get together with the California Conservation Corps and our alumni group, and we would put up markers at camp site places. For example, Cuyamaca State Park had one: we put a marker up there. We put one at Palomar State Park. We put one at the Thousand Trails up in Moreno. We put one in Vista, just out of Camp Pendleton. In fact, we put up nine of them in San Diego County. One of the local camps—the San Diego River Camp down here—was instrumental, at Point Loma, up at the Cabrillo Monument up there, of clearing off the hillside and putting in ice plants.

I'm not sure where, but Cabrillo Monument is one of the most visited monuments in the United States in the national park system. Anyway, we kept that going, and then I ran for Southwestern Regional Director. I had nine states under my administration.

*Did that include Nevada?*

Oh, yes. In fact, we used to go down to Las Vegas quite often. They had two chapters down there - one in Henderson and one in Las Vegas. The old CCC boys had held several reunions down there in Las Vegas over the years.

We kept that going, and then about eleven years ago I met a former air force retiree and California Conservation Corps man. At that time the Mayor O'Connor in San Diego was giving three-minute interviews on Saturday for people who had something they wished to talk to her about. We got together and went down, and Marion explained to her very nicely that we were from the old Civilian Conservation Corps, but that Diane Feinstein, who was the mayor of San Francisco at that time, had the San Francisco Conservation Corps. Well, I guess the lady's initiative—being ladies like that—decided, “Well, if she can do it, I can do it.”

She asked for information, and Mom came home and gathered up all the information we had and sent it back to her. A few days later we were called and asked for more information and points of contact, and twelve years ago they started the Urban Corps of San Diego, which we came to be the proud starters of. It is still going. In fact, the current director of the California Conservation Corps, West Pratt, came out of the Urban Corps of San Diego. He is an attorney by trade.

Anyway, we got that going. Then in 1984, President Reagan came to San Diego, and our national organization had been politicking for a CCC II for years and years, knowing what it had done for us. President Reagan came to San Diego—the whole house passed a request, and he pocket vetoed it, so we didn't think very much of Ronald. In any event, after he left, George Bush, Sr., picked up part of the

program that we had suggested, and they called it The Thousand Points of Light.

Yes. He started to initiate that, and he had support from Colin Powell, the general of the armies. Then, shortly after Bill Clinton got in, he adopted the Americorps Program and put that into being; it's six years old this year, and it will be seven years old next year. In fact, on the twenty-seventh, we are going to the sixth class graduation here in San Diego.

*So all of those really were out-growths of the old CCC camp idea?*

Absolutely. They have been very successful. There are probably thirty or forty states right now that have the full-time Conservation Corps going within them, as well as many counties and cities, and every once in awhile I read in the paper that the National Park Service and the State Park Service don't have the money to do what they need to do in the parks. What better place to be, than to put these CCC kids out there with Mother Nature to do the things that we used to do? In fact, one of the most popular programs in the California Conservation Corps is called the Back Country Program. The old CCC's did a lot of work in the Sierra Nevada's, up and down, as far as California and Nevada reaches - *a lot* of work.

The most popular program, for men and women alike today, is to be picked to compete for that program. They go out there in the boonies—with no toilet facilities, no running water, and no amenities—and they learn to act like human beings, a man and a woman, and work together. It's extremely popular and extremely competitive and one of the best programs that the California Conservation Corps has today.

*I see. Now, tell me about starting the museum.*



A gentleman by the name of Joe Griggs, which is an old CCC boy from Texas, worked for four different governors in different capacities. We had a training academy—a couple of training academies set at different places in California on two different occasions,—and it finally ended up in San Luis Obispo. A kid who graduated from the academy was about two inches taller than the average human being when he got out. He learned something, he felt good about himself, and it was an instant success. Then they cancelled it, but in the interim, we got to know Joe Griggs and the director of the academy up there at that time, and they had several buildings from the old CCC camp called Camp San Luis Obispo.

You might be aware of that; it's also headquarters for the California National Guard now. Joe with his manipulation and knowing four governors, and Enos with his cool ways at the California Conservation Corps, took these four buildings and put them in a presentable state. Joe was able to get work through the penal colony and things of this nature, to help paint and redo the barracks, and finally we ended up with four barracks up there. They are not the total length of the actual forty-man barrack type. These look like they could have been an infirmary building, about half the size, or a day room and/or a supply room, things of that nature, but they are CCC buildings per se.

We restored those, and we've had the California Conservation Corps come up and help repaint and caulk and do all the good things to it. We're very happy. We receive a lot of visitors. In fact, Marion has been talking with the California Historical Society, and she wants the state of California to publish a book pamphlet that could be sold in state parks and so forth, like several states have done.

An author by the name of James Embeck was appointed by the state of California, and he's writing the pamphlet right now. He and Marion are on a first name basis, as well as a man by the name of Asagawa. He's a member of the Historical Society, and she's going to make a report on the CCC in San Luis Obispo in August. Then we are going to give a tour of our museum and hope that they'll think that we're good enough to become recognized in the California Society.

*When you've worked on this museum, have you collected any information on the Nevada CCC camps?*

Yes. We've probably got forty or fifty booklets up there. We've gathered different companies and put them all in a binder-type, loose-leaf notebook of camps of the Ninth Corps area. That encompasses the same thing it did in the military: Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Utah. We have company information, where we could find it, where they will donate and put it into a binder.

*Great. Do you have some things for us to look at in terms of pictures and that type of thing?*

Yes.

*I know that Renee, who is doing the archival research on this project for us in Nevada, is going to be very interested in taking a look at that. She may have already gotten in touch with you. Renee Kolvet?*

I'm not sure. Mom would know that.

*If not, she may wait until you and I have had this chance to talk, and then she'll get in touch with you later, but I know we are real interested*

*in looking over the information that you have, because our project is trying to cover northern Nevada camps, specifically. We may pick up some information on the south, but just to get a start, we needed to narrow it down to something that we could manage this year, so I'm sure that she'll be in touch with you.*

We'll work anyhow and any way that we can to help folks out. That's what it is all about.

*Did you have anything more to tell us about Hawthorne that I didn't perhaps ask you?*

The only thing that I can remember different was that on a weekend, when you had nothing to do or nothing was planned downtown, quite often the Local Experience Men would take a group of us out to the old silver mines and gold mines that they had around there. They'd take us through them, show us what they were, and how the ore was mined and taken care of. Beyond that, there wasn't that much going on.

*OK. Well, thank you very much for your help.*

